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#80

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COMICS INTERVIEW

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UP FRONT

I'm sure you're all familiar with the story of the little Dutch boy who plugged the leak in the dike with his finger. I'd like to evoke a slightly different picture using that same idea. We still have the boy plugging a hole in the dike, but the hole isn't the only leak in the dike. It seems most of the dike — say 90% of it — has actually collapsed and water is rushing through it.

The little boy continues to steadfastly plug the little leak but is now receiving billions of dollars from the government to keep his finger in the dike. Both the boy and the government know it is impossible to actually stop the flood rushing through the collapsed dike, so the government declares it illegal to play in the water that pours through the rest of the dike. This does not actually stop people from swimming, fishing, or water skiing in the illegal water even though there are occasional drownings also.

The government finds itself helpless to stop its citizens from playing in the water, so it hires more little boys to try to plug the collapsed dike. Many of the little boys are simply washed away by the rushing water. Some of them even join those playing in the water. But, regardless of how many little boys the government hires, the water rushes on unchecked. It becomes obvious the government cannot check the flow of water, yet they continue to try, wasting billions of dollars on the attempt each year . . .

I'm sure you've figured out what I'm describing by now — the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. I feel I have accurately described the government's so-called war on drugs for what it is — a huge waste of money. The taxpayer's money. Your money. My money. And the silly thing is, the solution to the so-called problem is really quite simple! *Legalize drugs.*

Consider who profits the most from today's current drug laws — criminals. The profits available are so huge these criminals think nothing of murdering those who get in their way. Legalization is the worst thing that could happen to these people! Without the risk factor, drugs would be much less expensive to produce and distribute. Profit margins would fall more in line with other businesses. Legalization of drugs would, as a matter of fact, hurt *only* criminals.

Think about it.

— Henry Vogel

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"LEGENDS is Batman's *first* adventure."

ED HANNIGAN: Do you understand the premise of the LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT series?

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT: *Well, frankly, no.*

ED: With all of the hoopla and all, they seem to have somehow forgotten to tell people what the actual premise of the series is. The premise of the series is that this is *supposed* to be coming right on the heels of BATMAN: YEAR ONE. In fact, the first issue of this *overlaps* BATMAN: YEAR ONE, this is Batman's *first* adventure.

You'll notice the symbol on his chest without the circle, and there's no Robin — this is *early* Batman. This is why some people may be saying, "Gee, his Bruce Wayne doesn't quite look like Bruce Wayne." It's because I'm trying to draw a younger, *greener* Bruce Wayne who hasn't yet matured into the Batman that everybody knows about. So, that's the basic premise.

DAK: *Is that the premise for just your five-issue series?*

ED: I *think* it's the premise of the whole series. I could be wrong, but it seems crazy to break it off. I think they're going to try to establish their own very *loose* continuity, and if they have stories happening now — well, it seems to me that it would be interfering with the current continuity.

DAK: *Well, how does it feel to be doing, in effect, Batman's first adventure? Did you ever think that this would come to pass?*

ED: No, I never did. And it's kind of neat, although . . . I don't know if you read BATMAN: YEAR ONE or not —

DAK: *Yeah.*

ED: To me BATMAN: YEAR ONE is everything a comic book should be — it's *un*surpassed! As far as I'm concerned that's *really* Batman's first adventure, I'm just kind of filling in the little crevices and stuff. But, you know, it feels neat to be doing Batman.

DAK: *When I heard that you were the artist on it —*

ED: Total fluke.

DAK: *Yeah, I couldn't figure out how*

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"They were fooled into thinking I was a hot top artist."

that came to pass. I mean, nothing to do with your ability, but you're not a name associated with Batman.

ED: No, not at all. I was doing GREEN ARROW, which was and probably still is one of DC's better-selling titles, and I guess they were fooled into thinking I was a hot top artist. *(Laughter.)* I don't consider myself to be a hot top artist, except for the fact that I just happened to be on two books in a row that are top books — so maybe I could say the fact that I was on them had something to do with their success. But I almost think that anybody could have done GREEN ARROW with **Grell** writing it and it probably would have done well, because LONGBOW HUNTERS did so well, because **Grell** is so popular.

Anyway, I was sitting with **Andy Helfer** and I think it was **Terri Cunningham** at lunch, eating greasy corned-beef sandwiches, and we were just talking and griping and grousing about comics and stuff — gotta make more money, gotta do this and that. And Andy said, "You know, we're going to start a new BATMAN series, would you want to do the first five issues?" At first, I thought he was talking about a limited series, a mini-series type thing, and I thought, "Oh, that would be neat." I was getting a *little* tired of GREEN ARROW — although I must say that I remember it affectionately and I had a lot of fun on it, it was neat to do.

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT just sounded interesting. I really didn't know anything about it — and had no idea it was going to be this super hot. They talked me into it. They said, "It's going to be hot, it's going to be big!" and I was saying, "Yeah, sure, I've heard *that* before." *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Isn't it just about the best-selling book they've ever done?*

ED: It's *huge!* Well, I think **Byrne's** SUPERMAN #1 probably was bigger, I think that actually topped a million.

DAK: *Are the final sales in on your first issue?*

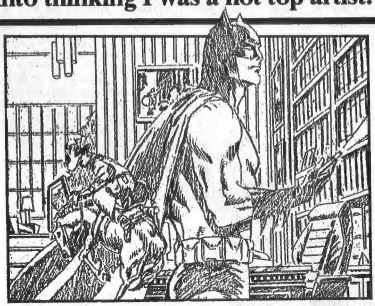
ED: Yeah. The final sales, as far as I know, were 960,000.

DAK: *I think that's close enough to call it a million.*

ED: It's close.

DAK: *In cocktail conversation I think you could say —*

ED: They should just say, "Ah, what the hell, Ed, it's a million and we'll give you the royalties for a million." *(Laughter.)* But I'm sure they'll have it counted down to the last penny. Anyway, it's fun, it's *neat!* It came at the time when we moved from New York to Vermont, and then we found a house in New Hampshire, and we also had a baby. Jeanne Ann was born at about page 10 of the third issue. *(Laughter.)* I rushed Heidi to the hospital and I didn't touch the book again for a week.

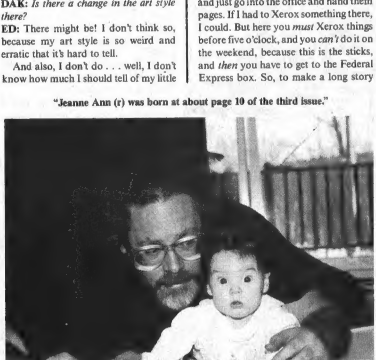


DAK: *Is there a change in the art style there?*

ED: There might be! I don't think so, because my art style is so weird and erratic that it's hard to tell.

And also, I don't do . . . well, I don't know how much I should tell of my little secrets, but oftentimes I don't do the book in order. Like, if I have to send them some pages — in the old days when I lived in Manhattan I would just hop on the subway and dodge bullets and make sure that nobody knifed me in the back, and just go into the office and hand them pages. If I had to Xerox something there, I could. But here you *must* Xerox things before five o'clock, and you *can't* do it on the weekend, because this is the sticks, and *then* you have to get to the Federal Express box. So, to make a long story

"Jeanne Ann (r) was born at about page 10 of the third issue."



"Marvel style was always a crap shoot."

short, sometimes I'll have to get them more pages and I'll slip through the story and try to do a real easy page, like with Bruce and Alfred talking. *(Laughter.)* I know I can whip that out real fast in time for the deadline. So, I don't do them in order.

Also, sometimes I just get stuck on a page. One page in the first issue — the page where they're robbing the old lady's clinic for drug money — that took me *three* days! When I look at it, I say, "Why was this page more difficult than the other pages?" It really wasn't, but for some strange reason — it was like a little mental block. So, if it goes on too far I'll just dump it and go on to another scene, and come back.

DAK: *Well, does this not wreak havoc with the scripter? How does Denny write a page out of sequence?*

ED: It's full script, like a little movie script, which is good for me because I can go through and check ahead and check back. Also, I do a certain amount of rearranging. For instance, in issue #2 there's a big full-page splash of Batman leaping across a building, and that wasn't in the script. Actually, I guess it was in the script as a little panel or something.

But I was a bit nervous because Batman hadn't appeared, by page 13 Batman hadn't made an appearance yet. So, I figured it would be nice to have a big, dramatic Batman. What I had to do was steal panels — like, if it was a seven-panel page, I'd put *eight* panels in it, and the next page I'd swipe two from the next page, until I had a free page just by scrunching up other pages. I get to do that with a full script, as long as I don't go totally hog wild — or I'll shift a balloon, you know, from one panel to another, or even from one page to the next page.

DAK: *Well, I don't know how you were working with Grell, but —*

ED: The same way more or less.

DAK: *— back in those incredible ancient old days at Marvel, when you and I did THE DEFENDERS, we always worked Marvel style, so called.*

ED: Right. I haven't worked Marvel style in a long time, I'm not even sure I could still do it. I prefer this way now.

DAK: *Really?*

ED: Yeah, because Marvel style was always a crap shoot on *everybody's* part. The scripter would write out a big plot and then if the artist was inspired or real good he would do a great story, but if he *wasn't* he'd do a mediocre story. Or the artist would do all of these great pages and then hope against hope that the script would be *fantastic*, but maybe the scripter had a bad day. You never knew until the end what the thing was going to read like. Of course, if I did a few stories that way I might change my mind and say, "Yeah, this is really great."

DAK: *I always thought it added spontaneity to the story.*

ED: Well, it's great if you have an artist and a writer who are in tune with each other and can communicate and know what they're doing. Then you can really have that kind of magic.

DAK: *That sort of makes it sound like you and Denny O'Neil* aren't *in tune.*

ED: Well, I live in New Hampshire, he lives in New York, we more or less work through Andy. He wrote a bunch of scripts and sent them to me. The only time we discuss anything is if we have a problem.

DAK: *Any examples?*

ED: Well, if you remember the first scene in the book, this knife thing, the clue — I *didn't* draw the knife in the early scene because I had to have the Indian holding the rifle in his hand. Bruce has to be left with no resources whatsoever, so every-

"Some clever readers will know who it is — I didn't."

body who had a pack or a rifle or *anything*, everything had to go over the cliff, so he could be left just standing there in his sweater. Well, Denny had the Indian that he was fighting pull out a knife, threaten him with the knife, but in order to do that — he's holding Bruce at the throat with his other hand — he'd have to put the rifle down or something. So I just said, "What the hell, he doesn't *have* to be holding the knife — if he's already saying he's going to cut him then why does he have to be holding the knife?"

Well, the reason was that later on that knife turned out to be a visual clue for the reader! By the time they read this interview they'll know that the Indian who they thought was dead in the first scene is actually one of the big villains, and the readers find out because they see that knife. But since I didn't *draw* the knife in there, they *wouldn't* find out. So, we went back and forth and decided that I'd give him some fringed boots that were the same as the fringed boots he was wearing in the first scene, so *that* was a bit of a clue. And I had Andy add one little word balloon, three words, which was reminiscent of the way he was talking in the first scene, so you could sort of put it together from there.

You actually find out quickly afterwards, it doesn't really matter if you guess, anyway. Like, some clever readers will know who it is and others — like myself, I didn't know until I got the third script — will say, "Oh, *that* guy!" *(Laughter.)* It would have been nice if Denny had told me this guy was going to come back.

DAK: *Yeah. He was scripting it as you were drawing it, he didn't do five scripts so that you knew where you were going with the story?*

ED: He did one script and then he did another script, and then he did the last three, the last three all came together.

DAK: *And then you knew where you were going with the story?*

ED: Yes, yes. But then there are little things, too, because I don't go through and memorize the script; so I can make strange little mistakes. Some of them I don't know if anybody would notice, but there's one scene in which a car hits a truck, and the car later on turns out to be a rental car. I didn't really realize that, so I drew this '59 Chevy. *(Laughter.)* But it's in Alaska and — I don't know, I've never been to Alaska, but I have *lots* of photos — they have all of these old junky cars and trucks. I figured there's probably a reason why there's lots of old junky cars and trucks in Alaska, like maybe it costs too much to ship new ones or something.

DAK: *Well, you've heard of Rent-A-Wreck? That's where they got the car!*

ED: Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's the kind of thing like when you're out in the country, it's not like California or someplace where everything is modern and new. If you have a '53 Ford pickup truck and it's in running order and you can get parts for it, there's no reason why it can't go 30 years.

DAK: *Hey, that's my philosophy.*

ED: People do that. And, you know, Alaska, rural places, it's the same kind of thing; if you want to rent a car it's not like you have Avis right there and you get yourself a brand new Caddy or something.

DAK: *No, no, in fact I can justify this for any of those readers who might be bothered. Do you remember the four-wheel drive jeep that I have?*

ED: Right.

DAK: *Well, in taking it to the mechanic to get the transmission fixed, the mechanic fixed it, all right, but when I brought it home the jeep burst into flames and burned — which is always exciting, especially when you're in it.* (Laughter.) *But —*

ED: Wasn't it built even before Chrysler owned the company?

DAK: *Right, right. But anyway, we tried to find a vehicle to rent in the meantime, went to a local garage —*

ED: Some guy that's got a bunch of cars.

DAK: *Yeah. Guess what, he rented us an old car for a month.*

ED: Sure, exactly.

DAK: *So it's perfectly logical.*

ED: I never should have brought it up. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Well, in your time you wrote stories for Marvel. I don't think you've ever written for DC —*

ED: One story, which had no dialogue in it, though, so it was easy to write. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *I'm waiting for the issue that you*

"It's like H.L. Mencken said, 'One man's

draw that has no art.

ED: Byrne already did that. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Well, the question that I have is: I know from hanging around with you and from talking to Denny, and from reading both of your stories and so on, that you guys have different philosophies of life, as it were.*

ED: Totally, *diametrically* opposed, at least 180 degrees.

DAK: *So, how does that work in collaborating? Do things ever kind of rub the wrong way?*

ED: I don't think so, because . . . here's the way I look at it: I feel that the story belongs to the writer, pretty much, and if I really objected *strongly* to anything in the story, I would not draw it at all. As long as he doesn't make it, like . . . oh, I don't know, it would have to be extremely horrible for me to just refuse to draw it. If he did a story that said killing little babies and kitty cats was okay with him, I might say, "I have a cat and I have a little baby, I don't think I want to draw this story."

What he has in here that I don't like is, I don't like mysticism — but I look at mysticism as sort of a mainstay of comics, like a ghost story or something. I'm not crazy about it, but I don't object to it so much. I object to it in real life, if people try to explain things through mysticism; or any of this "New Age" stuff, I get real impatient with it. But if it's a story element, then it doesn't bother me that much. If he did a story — which I don't think he would do, by the way — that was completely totally pro-communist or something, I'd say, "No, no, no!"

But actually Denny is pretty much — I don't want to put words in his mouth — but I think he's a liberal, you know. I'm more a conservative, although that oversimplifies it, because I'm more sort-of libertarian. He might actually be approaching being a libertarian from the *other* direction, which I notice some people in comics are doing. I always considered **Mike Gold** to be your classic weak-kneed liberal type, a lefty, but actually he's sort of approached the same philosophy I have, only from the other direction. So, even though Denny and I don't agree — I mean, we would probably *never* vote for the same guy — that doesn't really get in the way of doing a story together. He has the right to express *his* opinion.

DAK: *Let me get more specific with the question: There are those who say that, in effect, the LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT story has done some-*

Above (l, r): A rare glimpse of Ed's layouts and pencils.

religion is another man's horselaugh.'"

thing major —

ED: Which is?

DAK: *Which is to subvert the whole character of the Batman. Granted, it isn't mysticism per se, but Superman isn't responsible for having acquired his powers, he's gifted with them — but Batman was always the rational self-made man and the detective, no hint of mysticism in him. And yet here is a story going back to the roots of the Batman which more-or-less transplants mysticism right into his origin, thereby subverting the whole character.*

ED: Well, I don't think it transplants mysticism into his origin. I mean, it's not like . . . I don't know. I don't agree that it does. I don't think it really *changes* his origin, it just shows another side of his origin, or puts a new light on it.

Look at it this way: Batman trained for years and years to do things, he trained himself physically and mentally, and — even though I don't believe in any of this stuff — I think if I were setting out to become Batman I would not ignore anything, like strange, mysterious philosophies of the East. In the position of Batman I wouldn't pooh-pooh them, because there *might* be something to them to explore.

DAK: *Does Batman become mystic?*

ED: No no no no no no no. Only in the most minor way. I think what Denny did was in the classic ghost story "is it or isn't it?" tradition, you know what I mean? "You be the judge." Did Batman really get healed by the weird shaman's magic, or did he just get a chance to get warm and his natural immune system took over? None of it's proven. When you look at it really, nothing in mysticism ever *is* proven empirically.

DAK: *Or it wouldn't be mysticism.*

ED: Right, it would be science. By definition, mysticism is something that is unprovable — or unproven, at least. It requires a certain amount of faith, which is what I object to. I object to things that require faith, you know, like Tinkerbell. "If you believe in her hard enough she will exist." No, either she exists or she doesn't exist. *(Laughter.)* And later on you can find out that she feeds on mental brain waves, that's why it works, and that's fine, I can accept that.

DAK: *I see what you're saying.*

ED: Approach it as a very rational person. You know, I've always scoffed at astrology in any form, and yet I've heard you make little comments about astrology that would lead me to believe that you actually give some credence to it.

DAK: *Well, you could probably ration-*

"Frank and David didn't change so much as amplify."

alize anything.

ED: Well, you could. But to me it's like **H.L. Mencken** said, "One man's religion is another man's horselaugh." What to me is mystical baloney to some other person could be an everyday matter of course. This is sounding awfully a lot like freshmen in college. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Well, you know, these revampings of the origins of 50-year-old characters have to be deserving of discussion.*

ED: Oh, sure, yeah. I think, actually, it was rather tastefully done. We didn't go in and do something to Batman's origin — we did far less than **Byrne** did with Superman, far far less.

DAK: *Did Byrne actually do* anything *with Superman?*

ED: Well, he changed the look of a lot of stuff, Krypton and stuff, and he did away with everything that had been built up over the years.

DAK: *And then brought it back again.*

ED: Some of it he brought back.

DAK: *Well, if he'd stuck around he'd have brought all of it back.*

ED: He stopped himself before it went too far.

DAK: *I don't know. I miss Krypto the Wonder Dog and Superhorse, I must say.*

ED: Well, that was **Mort Weisinger** tacking stuff onto Superman. But **Byrne** did little changes of relationships, Lois and Clark and stuff like that. I think we did less than he did. He changed the whole look of Jor-El and Krypton in general — maybe his stuff was more like an art director type of choice. Frankly, I like the old stuff better. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Would you say the same thing about Batman, that with all of this modern revamped stuff you liked the old stuff better?*

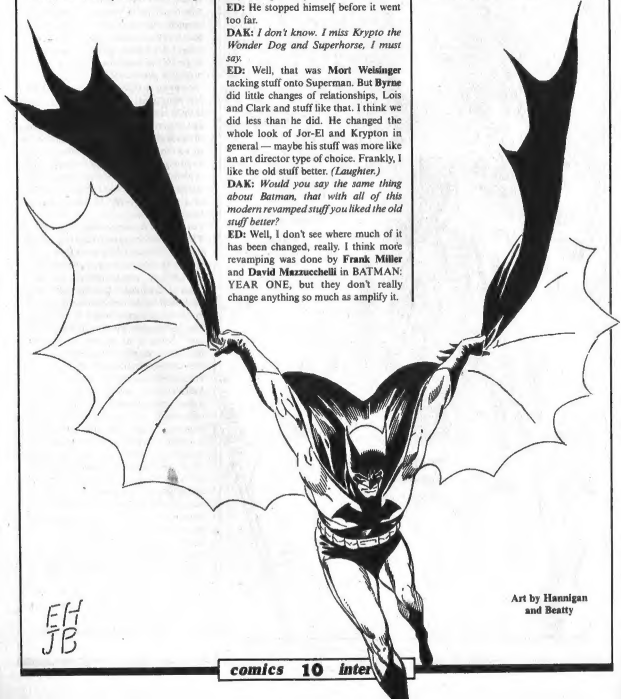
ED: Well, I don't see where much of it has been changed, really. I think more revamping was done by **Frank Miller** and **David Mazzucchelli** in BATMAN: YEAR ONE, but they don't really change anything so much as amplify it.

DAK: *Enhance it.*

ED: Yeah, they explain stuff — where did this come from, where did that come from. And, like I say, I love BATMAN: YEAR ONE. I hold it up as the shining example of "if you have to have superhero comics, this is how they should be done."

DAK: *Why do you say that?*

ED: It's so well written, and I love the illustrations, and . . . I just think it's the way a comic book *should* be done. The bare minimum, we should reach towards



Art by Hannigan and Beatty

The plot : "Crime is up, here comes Batman!"

that. I like the way he had the two narrative voices, Jim Gordon and Batman. He just took something that is intrinsically unrealistic and made it about as plausible as it could be made. In the real world someone who acted like Batman would be some kind of a nut — but he sort of made it seem like he *has* to do this now. He *has* to become this crime fighter, he *has* to inspire fear in the criminals, so he *has* to have the costume — various little things like that.

DAK: *What do you think separates it from so many of the other BATMAN comics that DC has published over the years?*

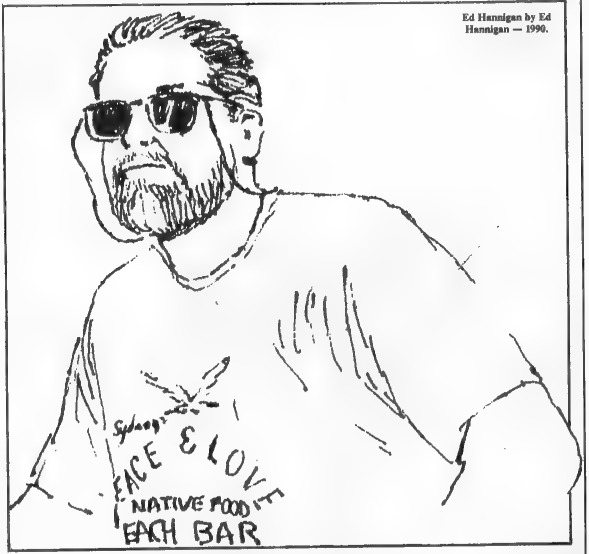
ED: Well, you know, any other BATMAN comic, or SUPERMAN or CAPTAIN AMERICA or SPIDERMAN, it's sort of like . . . it's hard to say, but you really have to suspend your disbelief to a *major* extent. Things are not logical, and things are not thought out on the part of the people doing the comics, for the most part. They're not carefully thought out. The characters tend to be cardboard cutout types, evil people are totally evil, good people are totally good. I can show it to you, but I don't know if I can really point to something and say this is the reason.

DAK: *Before we leave the subject of Frank Miller entirely, what about THE RETURN OF THE DARK KNIGHT, what did you think of that?*

ED: I liked it. I was a little disappointed by the ending. I thought it was pretty nifty, but I didn't think it was as good as YEAR ONE, or even as good as the "born again" DAREDEVILs that he did. But I did like it; visually it was real neat, and it had a lot of surprises. A lot of it, I thought, was just "Here's Frank throwing out all of his ideas." It wasn't as intricately woven, let's say, as a Kingpin **Frank Miller** story. It was more like, "Here comes Batman, he's out with a vengeance, we're going to hit you with both barrels!" But I liked it quite a bit. I mean, really, what's the plot of it? Crime is up, somebody better do something. Here comes Batman! That's the plot of RETURN OF THE DARK KNIGHT.

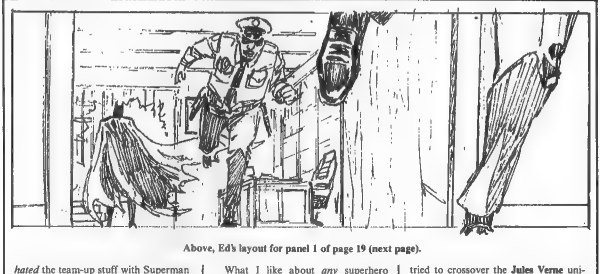
DAK: *Jim Salicrup says that it's the classic team-up story plot, except done in a more modern approach.*

ED: Yeah. I have to say that I absolutely



Ed Hannigan by Ed Hannigan — 1990.

"I don't want Captain Nemo to battle Martians."



Above, Ed's layout for panel 1 of page 19 (next page).

hated the team-up stuff with Superman in that. Ever since I was a little kid I've felt this way, going against the tide; I never liked team-up books. When I read BATMAN I don't want to be reminded that Superman exists. In BATMAN: YEAR ONE there's one offhanded comment about Superman flying in Metropolis, which I can ignore. I have problems with Superman. I like Superman a lot, but if Superman existed none of these other superheroes would be around, they'd be useless, they'd be superfluous. There'd be no Batman. Superman could fly into Gotham and clean up the crime problem in one day.

What I like about *any* superhero comic is "this is the only guy on Earth who is doing this." If *everybody's* running around in weird tights and funny costumes — which a lot of people seem to like — to me it's boring. I like the fact that here is the ordinary world and yet there's this one guy who's extraordinary and he's doing stuff. So, when they brought Superman into RETURN OF THE DARK KNIGHT, I just didn't like it. I want to read the story of Batman, I don't want to be distracted by other stuff. It's like if they combined 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA with WAR OF THE WORLDS, like if they tried to crossover the **Jules Verne** universe with the **H.G. Wells** universe. WAR OF THE WORLDS, to me that's a world where Martians invaded the Earth and stuff happened — I don't want Captain Nemo to suddenly surface to do battle with the Martians. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *You know Philip Jose Farmer, the science-fiction writer? He's kind of made a career of mixing all of these old characters —*

ED: Yeah. It was sort of fun at first, but after awhile it becomes incredibly incestuous.

TAPE RECORDER: *Beep.*

ED: There's this English comedy show called THE YOUNG ONES. It's basically these four college students who never go to class, and one of them is a hippie, one of them is a punk with pins in his ears and stuff, one of them's a political anarchist type guy, and one of them's a gold chain disco type guy — it's, like, totally surrealistic.

There's one scene when the hippie guy tries to telephone someone, and then later on he meets up and says, "Didn't you get our message?" So the guy pulls out a piece of paper with the message: Beep beep — why do telephones and other machines have to hassle people — why can't we live a totally pastoral existence with peace and brotherhood and machines that don't go beep in your ear?

DAK: *You mean this recording machine's every-fifteen-seconds beep is disruptive?* (Laughter.)

ED: It's just that it reminds me of that.

DAK: *Well, what you were saying about the team-up thing and Frank Miller and all of that —*

ED: I wouldn't accuse Frank of that because he doesn't do it that much, or he

Detail of Byrne's BATMAN ANNUAL #11 cover (thanks to Ed).

CITRUS VALLEY

"Hulk was monopolizing the bathroom and stuff."

didn't do it that much. But you get to the point where you have 30 guys running around in costumes, they're doing DYNASTY only everybody's wearing weird skintight costumes. It just seems stupid to me. Remember the SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE bit where they had the big party with all of the superheroes? **Garrett Morris** was Ant-Man, "I have the strength of one man!" **Belushi** was the Hulk and he was monopolizing the bathroom and stuff like that. Well, to me, that's what you come down to. This guy can climb walls, this guy can see through walls, this guy can run up walls — it loses its uniqueness. The great thing about a superhero is that he's got these powers that other people *don't* have.

DAK: *You're bearing out something that I have said for years, which is that I think DC made a mighty huge mistake in trying to imitate the Marvel Universe and coordinate all of their continuity.*

ED: Yes.

DAK: *What I always enjoyed about DC was that it had its own reality that was different from Marvel's, these characters could coexist and not have any continuity between them at all.*

ED: Right. But people won't tolerate that; it's like, "Why the hell didn't Green Lantern show up when blah blah blah." And I can understand that but . . . Actually, this is all going back to the comment when I said "If you have to have superhero comics this is the way they should be done," and I think the crux of that is "If you have to have superhero comics." And apparently, these days, you do. It's unfortunate. The only good thing about it is it's a lot easier to draw people in skintight costumes than it is to draw them in clothing. *(Laughter.)* But other than that, though, it's *bad* that there's got to be some kind of superhero in it or people aren't interested.

DAK: *Well, going back to Frank Miller again — maybe for the final time — in the new DC Universe, the post CRISIS DC Universe, he more-or-less defined the Batman character with YEAR ONE.*

ED: It was YEAR ONE and DARK KNIGHT. It seems like he's done *tons* of them, but he's actually done fewer pages of BATMAN than I've done.

DAK: *But he more-or-less defined the character — here's where the character* starts *and here's where the character* ends *— and you and a lot of other people like that a lot.*

ED: I don't necessarily *accept* that ending.

DAK: *The question is: How do you think your LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT, which sort of attaches onto and somewhat overlaps YEAR ONE, jibes with his viewpoint? Because — I don't think it's a big secret — Frank's probably also got a diametrically opposed philosophy to Denny's, and yet Denny is the architect of this story that interweaves and more-or-less enhances his. Do you see any conflict in that?*

ED: I . . . I don't know. I mean, I'm not so sure . . . I guess I'll have to take your word about Frank's philosophy. This happens all of the time, you know, but people who might be sort of conservative come off as being liberals when they write comics. I think Frank does when he writes a comic. I've heard people say, "Oh, that right wing, fascist Batman!" but to me Batman in his comics came off as a humanist liberal type of character. And if *I* wrote the character it would probably come off that way, too.

But I don't know if this is a *big* conflict. I think that what Frank did in YEAR ONE was to focus more on Jim Gordon and the family life, and he created a whole bunch of supporting

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Ed's pencil piece (for AMAZING HEROES) was later finished by Klaus Janson.

"A couple of panels I swiped for the effect of swiping."

characters — we're not using any of them *except* for Jim Gordon. I don't see any particular conflicts. The character of Batman remains just *Batman*, essentially. So I don't know, you'd have to ask Frank. *(Laughter.)* I don't see any huge conflict there, though.

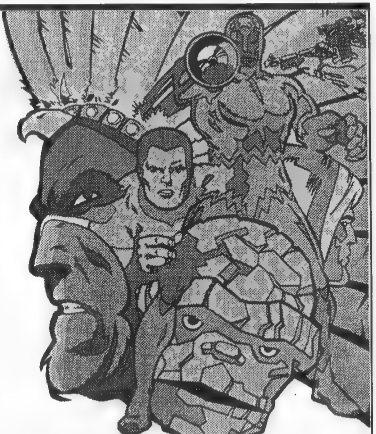
DAK: *Do you think that this story* adds *anything? When the LEGENDS story is all sewn up — was this story necessary? Does it have a beginning and a middle and an end, and does it in any way, shape or form add anything to the Batman legend?*

ED: It definitely has a beginning and a middle and an end. Does it *add* to the Batman legend? It does a little bit. It adds this Indian shaman aspect, but I don't think that's really a major thing. It gives you a glimpse of the earlier days of Batman — according to our *new* Batman, I mean, as opposed to if you went back and read the comics from 1939 and 1940.

Was it necessary? I don't know. The book is a commercial venture, obviously — and a commercial success. But artistically it's a Batman story. People aren't going to have some amazing revelation, like, "Oh, I never knew *that* about Batman before!" They might see little details here and there and say, "Oh, that's a neat little detail, I never thought of that." But people aren't going to come away from it with a different idea of Batman.

DAK: *Well, where does this story fit?*

ED: Oh, where you are by the end is BATMAN: YEAR TWO, I suppose. The first issue overlaps BATMAN: YEAR ONE, and then the second issue we're at the end of BATMAN: YEAR ONE — I guess at the following winter, actually. YEAR TWO, if I remember it — and I don't remember it that well — sort of just continued on. I have ignorance about BATMAN: YEAR TWO. I remember reading some of them, so I *think* this is sort of in the cracks between YEAR ONE and YEAR TWO.



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The teaming of Hannigan and Walt Simonson for the cover of MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL #6 (1981).

DAK: *Did you do much research?*

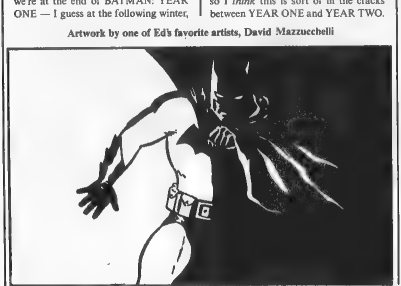
ED: I did lots of research but not on BATMAN. I did research on Alaska, I did research on stuff I had to draw. I didn't do research on BATMAN because I've been reading it all my life.

DAK: *Were you influenced by anybody artistically?*

ED: Well, only insomuch as I'm always influenced by different artists as time goes on. I was influenced a lot by **Mazzucchelli,** but my art and my style don't have any resemblance to **Mazzucchelli's** art and style — except for a couple of panels that I swiped, really, for the effect of swiping them, almost as a touchstone. In the first issue there are, I think, two panels.

Actually it's funny, Andy and I kind of agonized over this, because we do several pages of flashbacks . . . I don't even know if you could call it flashbacks, just simultaneous stuff that happened in BATMAN: YEAR ONE. At first, I was thinking, "Well, I'll just copy them so it'll almost be like watching a movie and here's the videotape of it." But then I decided not to do that — although I

Artwork by one of Ed's favorite artists, David Mazzucchelli



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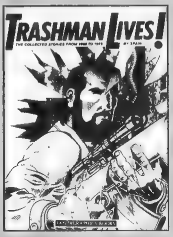

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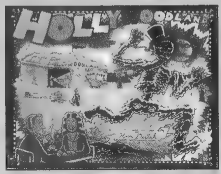

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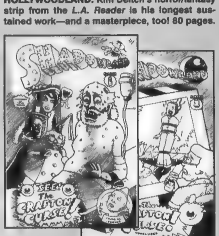

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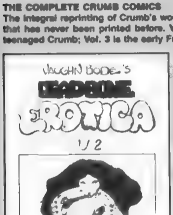

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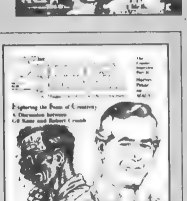

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Stan Lee PRESENTS:
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PAGE (1)

Various pieces by Ed . . . clockwise from top left: Cover layout for DETECTIVE COMICS, CLOAK AND DAGGER breakdowns (unpublished), the Bat mask as originally sketched and as it appears in LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT, and a couple of pencil panels from the same.

"He's like Sherlock Holmes only with good muscles."

know I did it in one panel, I might have done it in two. And then I went out of my way to draw the same scenes from different angles, which was kind of fun. Like, you have a police car skidding into a truck and blowing up. I really loved it the way **Mazzucchelli** did it, so I had to go out of my way to do it a different way — it didn't come out as good, it's a little plain. But I did steal one little scene of him sitting in his library.

Anyway, to go back to your question, it's just a matter of the people whose artwork I look at and admire. I try to learn stuff from them. Like **Al Williamson,** I like the way he draws clothing folds and shadows and stuff, so I try to do that sort of thing. But I don't think anybody's going to say, "Gee, his artwork looks so much like **Al Williamson's!**" It doesn't look anything like it. I didn't set out to . . . I sort of know what you mean because you could look at BATMAN: YEAR ONE and say, "Gee, **Mazzucchelli** was influenced by **Alex Toth** and **Milt Caniff** and so forth down the line," because it's very apparent. I think my style is still sort of unformed.

DAK: *I was just wondering if you went into the project with a look or a style in mind?*

ED: Not really. I wanted to make it a little simpler in its drawing, because it's sort of a getting back to the basics thing — which, again, **Mazzucchelli** did. He stripped it down to real basics, which I love. "Here's the basic story!" I just tried to do my normal stuff. It looks different from GREEN ARROW, I think, because the tone is different; and Denny has more panels on the page, which is something I have to deal with. But, of course, I wanted to get a dark, mysterious look to it, so it probably has a lot more shadow and black areas than my stuff normally does.

The scenes that have Bruce Wayne just being Bruce Wayne, with the public, I consciously tried to make them look almost like a romance comic — real open and airy, like Bruce is this bimbo-type character, a spoiled rich kid — and contrast that with Batman, who I tried to make a scarier-than-usual Batman, a little more of an edge. I made him a little darker and a little meaner, because the way I look at it is the Batman now with the yellow thing on his chest is older and wiser and he's mellowed out. The modern day Batman, the yellow-on-the-chest Batman, my favorites would have to be some of those **Neal Adams** ones that were written by Denny and by **Len Wein.** Neal made him look like he was a more

mature guy. He's not a hothead.

DAK: *He's got it down to a formula.*

ED: Yeah! He's like Sherlock Holmes only with good muscles. I tried to make him a little meaner and more fanatical or something.

DAK: *What's the deal with the masks on the covers?*

ED: I wish that could have been coordinated with the stories a little better; some of those covers would have actually gone better with other stories. But, basically, we wanted to come up with something thematic. Andy and I just sat down and we knew we wanted to do five issues in a row that will be a theme, and we knew that we had the bat mask in it because we already had the first script, I was working on it. And Batman wears a mask, so we thought maybe we could do something with masks. It really was just a visual concept.

Under that bat mask on the first issue is Batman, and then under the Batman mask in the third issue is Bruce Wayne, and then under Bruce Wayne there is a skull — it's, like, his empty nothingness. Then the last issue it shows the skull bursting apart and there is the full figure of Batman. But I don't know if I can explain it anymore. It's like if I tried to explain to you the third movement of **Beethoven's** Ninth Symphony. I could probably describe it to you, but describ-

The evolution of a DETECTIVE COMICS cover by Ed.

ing it to you does not explain it to you.

DAK: *It's a very unusual cover. The publicity for it says it's the first new solo Batman book since the original — then you look at the first issue and it has a weird Indian mask on it. It's not the cover you would expect.*

ED: It was a nervous thing but we couldn't think of another way to do it. And, in fact, you can see that the bat mask on the cover doesn't quite look like the one inside. I had already drawn most of the first issue by the time I did that cover, and they said I should make it look a little bit more like a bat. So, I didn't paint that I can't remember the name of the guy who did — you have to realize

"He is putting on his costume for the *first* time!"

that I know nothing about the comics industry. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Oh, that's not true.*

ED: Ask me about stuff that went on in 1973! So, I made it look a little bit more like a bat. I felt like I should go back and change the whole thing so it was consistent, but I just didn't have the time to do it. I *did* work out the color scheme, even though I didn't paint it; I tried to make it look like if you follow the contours of the mask, the blue area and the other area, to make it look a little bit more like Batman. I think that they probably felt like, "Oh, no, we're starting a brand new Batman book and Batman's not on the first cover!"

DAK: *Or in the book, hardly.* (Laughter.)

ED: Yeah, right. So they decided to put that "protective cover" on it.

DAK: *A-ha!*

ED: Another thing, I do a lot of little things in there which are for my own amusement. There is the scene where Batman first puts on his costume, which to me is a great landmark scene — here he is putting on his costume for the *first* time! But then the next shot where you see him *in* his costume, if you look close enough you'll realize that actually what you're seeing is his reflection in a mirror.

I wanted to have Alfred and Batman both looking out at the reader but I didn't want it to be too contrived, so I figured, "Well, he'd probably look in a mirror." How would he say that Alfred did a good job unless he could see it, he'd *have* to be looking in a mirror! So I figured I'd just show the reflection in the mirror but I wouldn't *show* you. But if you look at it closely you'll see his belt buckle is reversed from that panel to the next, and you can see over to the left of the next panel a little bit of mirror with a reflection of the portraits on the wall —that was a little hint. But it means nothing, it's just an artist playing around.

DAK: *Well, the cover motif stuff, did you pencil the covers and then they were painted by someone else?*

ED: Yes.

DAK: *What did you think about the marketing thing, the first issue being released in four different colors with these protective covers?*

ED: Well, if it works it was genius. *(Laughter.)* That's what I think about it.

But I'll tell you this — I don't want to upset the apple cart too much, but I really think that the collector market in comics is a bunch of bullshit. I can say that with a little bit of experience because my mother was for many years an antique dealer, we would buy and sell antiques and stuff, collectibles. What's happened is . . . there was a collectibles market in those little figurines, little porcelain sentimental sculptures. When they first came out they were hand-crafted and very few of them were made, so they were valuable because they were rare, and some people started collecting them . . . it's like Doritos, you know, "Crunch all you want, we'll make more!"

So, lots of people pay money and collect those schlocky figurines now, but they really have no value. All they do is estimate the market and say, "Hm, I think we can sell three million, let's make three million." Now, people who buy them because they *like* them, fine, I have no quarrel with them — except I think they have lousy taste. But people who buy them because they think they're going to go up in value and someday they're

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"The collector market in comics is a bunch of bullshit."

Wrap-around pencils by Ed for MARVEL UNIVERSE.

can sell them, they're fooling themselves! The only people who will be in the market for those things are other people who are also buying them to someday sell to other people. Well, the same thing is true of comics — "Crunch all you want, we'll make more!"

And so, if you bought four copies of that thing — if you're a completist and you *want* to have the four different colors in your collection, fine. But I seriously doubt that someday they'll be really valuable, in fact I know they won't be. Remember when **Frank Miller** was doing DAREDEVIL — to get back to Frank for a second. People were hoarding copies, they were buying 50 copies of all that stuff. And now you can go into a comics shop and find those **Frank Miller** DAREDEVILs for not much more than they originally cost on the newsstand. There isn't a huge market because there are just too damn many of them.

People don't like to talk about this because, obviously, we're cutting our own throats to say, "No, don't collect them." It's in our interest to make you think that they are collectable. But I would say this, kids — first, don't do drugs. *(Laughter.)* Second, buy comic books if you like them, if you like to *read* them. If you're buying them as an investment, it's a stupid investment, buy savings bonds. As an investment they're lousy. They take up a lot of space, they're hard to lug around, they're really labor intensive when it comes right down to it. If you go to any flea market you'll find people there with boxes and boxes of them, what can I tell you.

This collectible thing really drives me crazy. It drives me crazy to think that people are buying ten issues and sticking them in plastic bags and not reading them. I'll take the money, sure, but I'd rather have kids read the stuff.

DAK: *The way you say kids, I guess you think that's the audience?*

ED: Kids or whatever, old men with pot bellies. *(Laughter.)* I don't care if old men with pot bellies lose their money on this stuff, though. Kids who don't know what they're doing, it's different. Old men with pot bellies, if they're still stupid at that age then I've got no pity.

DAK: *Do you think the cover in four colors was . . . was it just to dress up the newsstand, it looks light and lively, or do you think —*

ED: I think it was that, and I think it was the collectible thing, too, It's one of those things where you go, "If we could do *this*, this would happen and this would happen and this would happen." I know for a fact that people are buying multiples. I've heard from my local comics shop — and let's give them a plug, they're called Comics Etc., owned by **Tim Knowles** in Keene, New Hampshire, and he also has a store in Manchester, and somewhere else but I don't remember where — anyway, they've told me that people are grumbling and complaining, "Oh, why'd they do four covers, now I have to buy four copies." *(Laughter.)* To me that's a real weird psychology.

My feeling is you should go in and say, "Ah, I like the magenta one, I'll buy that." I mean, when I was a kid I would probably have done something dumb like tear off that protective cover thinking, "Well, it's served its purpose." *(Laughter.)* But anyway, if that's what they want to do, that's marketing and bless their little hearts because I'm getting paychecks from this stuff. Far be

"I'll probably never have more talent than I do now."

More beautiful pencil work by Ed (LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT).

it from me to bite the hand that feeds me.

DAK: *Well, where's the next Ed Hannigan project? Would you come back for another stint on BATMAN? And since you used to write comics, too, are you going to become an artiste and an auteur and do all that sort of stuff?*

ED: Yeah, I want to do all that, but I don't know when. As far as coming back on BATMAN, like **John Byrne** said, "Never say never." I have no *intention* of doing it, even though I like the character a lot. I would like to come back and do BATMAN when I'm a more talented artist. Well, I'll probably never have more talent than I do now, the brain cells die more and more every day. *(Laughter.)* But my feeling about it is that I've got two or three years before I'm really a good artist. I could be wrong, maybe I'm over the hill, but I really feel that I

"In the old days we didn't expect to make a living wage."

Various pencil views of the Batman by Ed (detail).

haven't hit my stride and that this stuff should be considered by the legions of **Ed Hannigan** fans to be my early work.

DAK: *But come on now, your early work's been going on for what, ten or fifteen years now?* (Laughter.)

ED: Well, I count it from when I started doing GREEN ARROW. I went through a *long* period of not doing anything but cover sketches. I think I stopped drawing comics in 1979 or something, over at Marvel, and then I stopped writing them around 1980. Except for the occasional work — I drew a couple of comics here and there, a TEEN TITANS ANNUAL, an ATARI FORCE. I didn't do comics for years and years. So I really consider my career to only be three years old. If you're any kind of artist and you don't do it for awhile, you lose it. You pick it up, you remember stuff, but you have to recoup a lot.

DAK: *Well, the business has changed a lot over the years.*

ED: Right.

DAK: *Back in those early days when we were scratching out livings and doing whatever it was at Marvel, the comics field didn't pay very well.*

ED: Yes, I lived in an apartment in Hell's Kitchen and I couldn't even afford the rent 'cause I was only making maybe $25 a week.

DAK: *When you do a book such as LEGENDS that sells a million copies, where does that put you then? Obviously, it's more than $25 — you must be in the big leagues.*

ED: Sort of, not really. Lots of it goes to taxes. Since we just moved, we have to buy furniture. We've had a baby, we have to do stuff. It's not like I'm going to be driving around in a Rolls Royce or anything. However, if it weren't for something like this I couldn't afford to own a house and stuff. Definitely not the big leagues — better off than I was.

DAK: *Well, it's quite a thing, though, when you can do four or five issues of a comic and add a room on the house or something. That's a far cry from just a few years back.*

ED: But in the old days we were all young and we didn't expect to make a living wage, and now we're making what adults make. *(Laughter.)* Yes, amazingly, we've turned into adults, just because time has passed.

DAK: *What will you do after this?*

ED: I have no idea, I really don't know.

DAK: *You're not going back to GREEN ARROW?*

ED: I don't think so. I might go back for one issue. I think I want to do some *other* stuff, like things without deadlines, because what I really would like to do is rest and just enjoy my life a little bit, as much as I can afford to. But I don't want to retire or anything like that, I want to keep working. So, I'd like to get some work that doesn't have deadlines. What it's going to be, I don't know yet. And then I have a project I want to work on which will be mine, which I'll write and draw and probably ink — do *everything* on. Like everybody wants to do, I want to do it, too. *(Laughter.)* And then that will either succeed or fail, and depending on whether it succeeds or fails I will determine what I want to do after that.

DAK: *That's usually the big move that people make to become majors.*

ED: Yeah. I can't do it just yet, but I want to do it soon.

"I went to Port Richmond High School in Staten Is., NY."

JOHN CELARDO

The offices of King Features Syndicate are in a nondescript building on the east side of New York's midtown, just a few blocks from Grand Central Terminal and the DAILY NEWS Building. I had decided to talk to John Celardo for two reasons. 1.) I had always enjoyed his work when I could find it (both the TARZAN and BUZ SAWYER strips he has drawn are not noted for their recent high visibility); and 2.) We are both natives of New York's forgotten borough, Staten Island. I met Celardo at King's offices, as he showed me his working space in the "bullpen" and introduced me to some of his coworkers. Then we retired to the office's "kitchen" for our talk.

1983, HAGAR 10th Anniversary party with creator/artist Dik Browne & John Celardo. The drawing (of Dik) was contributed by John — beautiful piece!

PAT O'NEILL: *To start with, why don't we run down your background, a bit of your career. I know some of it . . .*

JOHN CELARDO: I started in comic books.

PAT: *When was that?*

JOHN: The latter part of 1938, early 1939. I worked in the **Eisner-Iger** shop. I had done cartooning in high school. I went to Port Richmond High School in Staten Island, NY.

PAT: *So did I.*

JOHN: Did you? So did my son. I drew for the school newspaper, THE CROW'S NEST. I started by copying comics, the same as anyone who wanted to draw comics did in that era. I looked at the comics in the SUNDAY NEWS and the DAILY NEWS. I was intrigued by them and started copying them.

I took four years of art in Port Richmond High, but that was my entire art background. When I graduated, I went to work with the National Youth Administration, a Roosevelt Depression-era work program. Because of my art studies in high school, they put me to work at Barrett Park Zoo [now the Staten Island Zoo], doing murals of animals. When that was finished, I moved to the Works Progress Administration, and they put me to work drawing fossils for the federal government. I was making about $30 a week. It was a real boondoggle kind of thing, but it kept people working.

During this whole time, I wanted to get into comics and the comic-book business became very big. I did a superhero of my own called Powerman

All art accompanying this interview © 1988 King Features Syndicate, Inc., unless otherwise noted.

"I did a lot of work on titles for Fiction House."

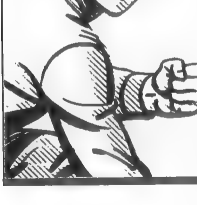
— just a copy of Superman. I didn't think anything would come of it, but somebody suggested I bring it up to **Eisner and Iger.** They said they liked it and they bought it. It was a 10 or 12 page story. They also offered me a job on staff. They had a regular bullpen, with about a dozen people on staff. I did breakdowns for a lot of very talented artists. I didn't have much grounding in figures and all, so it became both my school and my profession.

I did a lot of work on the titles **Eisner and Iger** produced for Fiction House. At the same time, the son of the guy who owned Fiction House worked for them as well. I guess he was there for one purpose — to learn the business and then go back to Fiction House and run it. When he left, he said he was putting together an in-house art staff, and he invited me to join them. By then I was 21.

I was one of the early draftees in World War II — I was drafted in February of 1941 — so just as I was getting into the field, I went into the service for five years, in the infantry, finishing up as a company commander.

At the end of the war, I went back to Fiction House. I was on staff there for about a year and a half, until they disbanded the art staff and we all went freelance, still doing work for them. From there, I went on to a number of other publishers.

At that point, a good friend of mine from the staff days, **Bob Lubbers,** was offered the TARZAN strip by United Features Syndicate. We maintained our friendship and he did the strip for a few years. Then he decided to give TARZAN up in order to start drawing LONG SAM, which was written by **Al Capp.** He



From 1950, KA'ANGA, from Fiction House. Below: BUZ SAWYER (all by Mr. Celardo).

©1950 Fiction House

asked if I would like to try out to take over TARZAN. I did some samples and UF accepted them. I worked with a writer on the strip for about five years - **Dick Van Buren,** whose father **Rae Van Buren** did the ABBIE 'N' SLATS strip.

When we worked in comic books back then, we generally wrote our own stories. We did up a storyboard, then went in to **Will Eisner** or **Jerry Iger** to talk the plot over; then you did the final breakdowns. It was that background that got me into writing the TARZAN strip. I did that for about 10 years. Then the **Edgar Rice Burroughs** people asked me to go to work out there in Tarzana, California. They were starting a library out there and they wanted to bring all the units that were producing TARZAN material out there.

But I didn't want to leave New York. I had two young children; I *liked* New York. I also realized that the TARZAN strip was not going to last too much longer; the listing was down pretty far. There was only so much money I could make on it at that point. My wife and I discussed it and I decided to go back to freelancing in comic books.

It worked out pretty nicely, because I got the Topps bubble gum account around that time. I love sports, I always have, and this was sort of a vicarious way of being in baseball, basketball, football. I drew the package for the bubble gum and cards. Along with that I did some work for DC Comics . . .

PAT: *I remember some of that . . . CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN . . .*

JOHN: At some point, about 1972, King Features Syndicate was looking for an associate comics editor to replace a man who was retiring. They wanted someone with an art and a writing background. I told them, "I'm not an editor," but they felt that my background fit the bill. By the time I accepted the job it was 1973, and after a few days I was comfortable. I felt right at home in the job, and the company felt I could do it.

What it involves, basically, is a background in the field and a certain knowledge of grammar and the like. I was always interested in that aspect of it, even when I wrote myself.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: John Celardo.
Born: Staten Island, NY, 1918.
Art Education: Port Richmond High School.
Current Position: Associate comics editor, King Features Syndicate; artist and writer, BUZ SAWYER.
Past Credits: Covers in the 1940s for many Fiction House titles, including JUNGLE and KA'ANGA; interior art for those titles as well; TARZAN Sunday and daily strip, 1953-1967; THE GREEN BERETS daily and Sunday, 1967-1969; DAVY JONES daily and Sunday, 1969-1970; various comic books, including CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN and BELIEVE IT OR NOT.

"I've been in the business 50 years — I'm 70 years old."

PAT: *At what stage do you, as an associate editor, first see the material on the way out to the newspapers?*

JOHN: All the strips we handle come to the syndicate and are logged in. Then they come directly to the other associate editor and me. We must have a hundred and some-odd strips to handle; each of us is assigned to a certain number of daily and Sunday strips. We're responsible for reading the copy you have to check the dates on the strips, the copyright notices . . . and then you just check the grammar and art. You also have to check continuity: with the number of hands involved these days, for example, in one week, the artist may have drawn a character in a checkered suit . . . but by the time he comes up in the storyline again, the artist may have forgotten what he was wearing. It's our job to make sure those things don't happen

That's another thing. We've been editing these strips for so long that we know there are some guys who are notorious spellers, guys who make the same kind of mistakes all the time. There are others who are great – who never make mistakes.

PAT: *Do you have to make art corrections — in the artist's style?*

JOHN: Yes — in fact, I think that's one of the big contributions I make. I've been in the business 50 years — I'm 70 years old – and with my experience, I can do it. It's not easy to find a young person who could come in and do that. It's not something I have to do daily, but quite often. That's the one role, among other things, that one of the others might not be able to do. Sometimes, if it's a major change, and if there's time, we'll send it back to the artist for the correction.

Then after the corrections are made, if they're done outside, they come back to us as the final arbiters. Then they go out to the engravers. We have two separate operations for that. King Features has its own plant in Woodside, Queens, for the black-and-white daily strips. They print up the six daily strips for a week on one

TARZAN
A TARZAN Sunday by John, 7/28/63.
WE MUST MOVE FAST TO MAKE IT BACK TO YOUR BOAT, DR. JONAH!..
IF NOTHING ELSE- THESE MANDAS ARE PERSISTENT.
TM. Reg. U. S. Pat Off.—All rights reserved
Copyright 1963 by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
I'M HOLDING YOU MEN BACK... SORRY!
WITHOUT YOU TO GUIDE US, TARZAN, WE'D BE COMPLETELY LOST IN THIS BLACK JUNGLE!
I WOULD BE LOST ON YOUR MAIN STREET... THE TREES AND SHRUBS ARE MY SIGNPOSTS!
THERE IT IS- OUR BEAUTIFUL 'ARK-O-OLOGY!'
©1963 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

"When comic work was slow, I'd hustle other assignments."

sheet and mail them off to the subscribing papers. The color strips are done at a different plant.

[*At this point, John's fellow associate editor interrupts with some strips that need immediate editing. When John completes looking at a week's worth each of CROCK and THE PHANTOM, the conversation resumes.*]

PAT: *I just recalled that you once took over the art chores on THE GREEN BERETS from Joe Kubert.*

JOHN: Yes, that was after I'd left TARZAN. Joe was getting busy setting up what eventually became his school and had to leave the strip. During that time, when the comic-book work was slow, I'd have to go out and hustle up other assignments, so I was always happy when the chance to work on a newspaper strip came along. But this was during a period that war was not a popular subject. It's amazing the News Syndicate even took the strip on, there was enough of that stuff in the front of the newspaper.

PAT: *And now, in addition to your staff work, you're also writing and drawing BUZ SAWYER for King?*

JOHN: Or I will be, until it ends in October.

PAT: *Tell me about that.*

JOHN: A few years ago, when **Roy Crane** died, the strip was continued by his long-time assistant **Hank Schlensker. Schlensker** was also getting on in years and, after a couple of years working on the strip alone, he decided to retire. At that point, King asked if I would take over the drawing, with the writing to be done by **Al Capp's** brother, **Elliott Caplin.** I agreed.

PAT: *Crane — and Schlensker as his assistant — had a very recognizable style, based in part on their use of duo-tone paper for shading. Did you find it hard to mimic that style, as you were undoubtedly asked to do?*

JOHN: Well, whenever you take on an established strip, you try to make the

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"You can't copy another style no matter how hard you try."

Above: more panels from John's BUZ SAWYER strip. Below: misc. panels of Buz.

transition seamless, but eventually your own style creeps in and dominates. In this case, this use of the duo-tone paper, which I've continued, has maintained the look of the strip, I suppose. You can't copy another artist's style, anyway, the way you handle a pencil and a pen always comes through, no matter how hard you try.

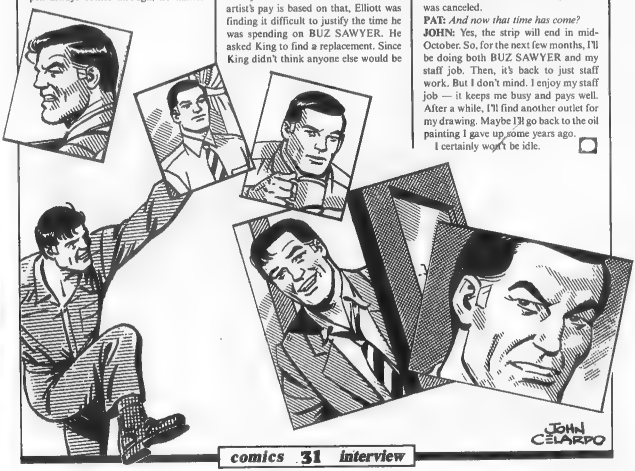
PAT: *When did you take over writing BUZ SAWYER?*

JOHN: That was about two years ago. Like most story strips, BUZ SAWYER's fortunes have been falling recently. The number of papers carrying it has fallen to a very low number. Since a writer or artist's pay is based on that, Elliott was finding it difficult to justify the time he was spending on BUZ SAWYER. He asked King to find a replacement. Since King didn't think anyone else would be interested in writing it for the same reasons **Caplin** expressed, they asked me to start writing it as well. I agreed — provided they began looking for a strip to replace BUZ SAWYER. The little bit of extra money wasn't worth the extra time and effort it took me, either. I said I would write and draw the strip until it was canceled.

PAT: *And now that time has come?*

JOHN: Yes, the strip will end in mid-October. So, for the next few months, I'll be doing both BUZ SAWYER and my staff job. Then, it's back to just staff work. But I don't mind. I enjoy my staff job — it keeps me busy and pays well. After a while, I'll find another outlet for my drawing. Maybe I'll go back to the oil painting I gave up some years ago.

I certainly won't be idle.



"Once I discovered that it was unsafe outside the

TOM SUTTON

By the time you read this, SQUALOR, the third in First Publishing's First Fiction Series, with pencils and inks by Tom Sutton, and words from me, will already be appearing in your local comic store. SQUALOR tells the tale of Harry "Squalor" Keller, a burnt-out physics theorist with two Ph.D.'s and a slight tendency toward psychosis, who falls out of "linear" time and into A-Time, where human lives unfold in endless trails and archetypes

While trying to prove to the "mundane" world (and himself) that he isn't crazy (and failing), Harry stumbles onto a devious, roundabout plot to alter the future, forcing him to search deep inside himself and answer the musical question, "If Helen Keller fell down in a forest and no one was there to hear her, would she make a sound?" As a direct result of SQUALOR, my first foray into the medium, I was fortunate enough to cross paths with Tom Sutton, a gentleman who's been in the trade for over two decades. To commemorate this event, and plug the book, I took the opportunity to chat with Tom for COMICS INTERVIEW about his career. What follows are excerpts from that two-hour talk

Writer/interviewer, Stefan Petrucha.

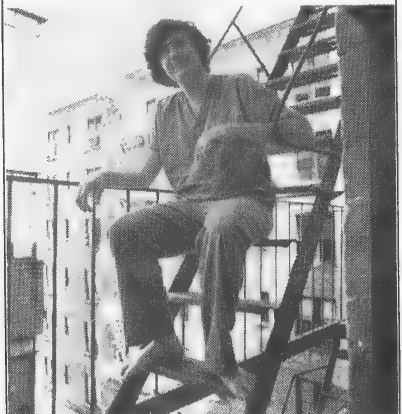


Photo: J. Shelby Grass

STEFAN PETRUCHA: *What made you pick art?*

TOM SUTTON: That was all I could do. *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *Drawing ever since you were a wee lad and so on?*

TOM: Yes. Once I discovered that it was unsafe outside the door, I decided to stay inside. *(Laughter.)* My father used to bring me these long rolls of white butcher's paper — remember that stuff? That was neat. My father used to get the meat on his way home, this was an old-fashioned neighborhood and we had a real butcher, and that's how he got me these rolls. They were nice because you could lay them out on the floor and lay on your belly on the linoleum and get air conditioned at the same time. And you could do whole armies, *endlessly!* When you got tired of that you did big circuses, which is very much the same thing. So I did that. We couldn't afford a child psychiatrist, so they just had to put up with it. "He's doing armies again, oh God." *(Laughter.)* So, I was an *indulged* single child. I grew up being very selfish and probably a little twisted.

STEFAN: *Did you read quite a bit as well?*

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STAR TREK © 1989 Paramount Pictures. SQUALOR © 1989 First Comics/Antarctic Press

door, I decided to stay inside. That was neat."

Photo J. Shelby Grass

"The Museum School had nothing to do with comic

Alligator, alligator, hump-backed whale,
These are the things that I see when I sail
Far away to quiet island
I go there when I'm laughing
I go there when I cry

More of Tom's pencils & inks from the SQUALOR comic.

TOM: I was into reading, yes. I was read to — my mother was a very doting and possessive woman, and she still is. *(Laughter.)* You suffer a lot of rather *hard* humor at an early age because of that kind of thing, but on the other hand you do learn to read before you ever go to school.

STEFAN: *Yes, I was reading in kindergarten because of comics.*

TOM: And that's part of what was wrong with school, wasn't it - it was terminal *boredom*. The teacher's asking everybody to point out the orange block and you're thinking, "What the fuck is this?" I *hated* school, hated any kind of organization, and still do. Not a team worker, not a team player. · ·

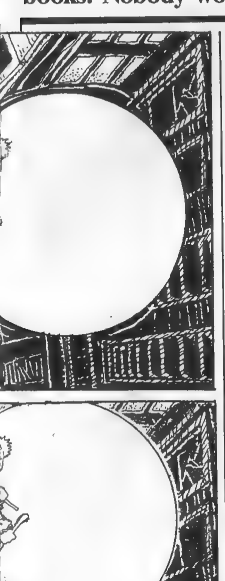
STEFAN: *And eventually school stopped and you had to get work?*

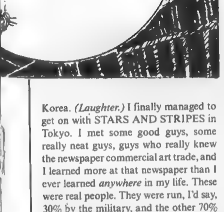
TOM: Yeah. One day I just came in and the guy that was in charge of us lower types said, "Tom, Tom — you just can't wander in anymore, Tom." I had decided I'd had enough of it anyway. But I remember, the Museum School had nothing to do with comic books at all. *Nobody* in the Museum School would ever have *admitted* having *touched* one.

STEFAN: *And that's what you were interested in getting into?*

TOM: No. Earlier than that I had done a comic strip in the Pacific STARS AND STRIPES, the Service newspaper, for about a year — sometimes I think it was longer. It was called JOHNNY CRAIG. It was a stupid thing, a kind of a homemade STEVE CANYON thing. It was contrived by me to keep me out of

books. Nobody would ever admit having touched one."





Korea. *(Laughter.)* I finally managed to get on with STARS AND STRIPES in Tokyo. I met some good guys, some really neat guys, guys who really knew the newspaper commercial art trade, and I learned more at that newspaper than I ever learned *anywhere* in my life. These were real people. They were run, I'd say, 30% by the military, and the other 70% by . . . whatever they called them, civilians, government members. Usually these were guys that couldn't get a job in the USA. *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *They went to see the world.*

TOM: Yeah. And I got a lot of on-the-job training. It's the only way. I don't believe in people standing there talking to you, to me it's senseless. Anyhow, so there we were, and then it was time to come home, went to the Museum School. Then I went to work for a gentleman named Hank at a small commercial art studio. It was a typical commercial art studio, three or four guys with little green eyeshades and airbrush things. And all of these men were perfectly gray, they had no skin tone anymore — mostly they illustrated the interiors of elevators. *(Laughter.)* It was a fascinating and exhilarating job, Stefan.'

STEFAN: *Were you the kid in the office?*

TOM: Yes, I was the "get the coffee, get the fuck out of the way" kid. But you got to do *everything*. You got to run the primitive stat cameras, paste up type, learn a little bit about this, a little bit about that — and these were things that were *never* taught at the Museum school. I never understood what they really wanted out of me. They had great parties, though — they had *great* parties! Rich folks have much better parties than poor folks.

STEFAN: *But you learned more working with Hank at the commercial art studio.*

TOM: Oh, working for old Hank, Henry — he somehow identified himself with that little wretched comic-strip character.

STEFAN: *Little bald Henry, yeah.*

TOM: He *hated* that. I would call him Henry and he would just *glare* at me. When he finally fired me I said, "Henry, would you mind turning a little to the left, your head is shining in my eye." *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *Did you ever do any art for them, or were you just the office boy?*

TOM: I did a *tremendous* amount of work for them, but I never did any art. What is art? What are we talking about here? I drew lawn mowers, windows, cocker spaniel collars, all kinds of exotic things. *Yes!* And there was a lot of technical shit. You learned to use these photo-screens so things would come out looking like pen and ink drawings. You learned to use all kinds of technical pens and all of that kind of stuff. So, then I went to join a little jerk-off animation place in Boston. Of course, they would bid the absolutely laughable lowest bid possible for jobs and then come back to us and say, "Gee, we got a great deal."

STEFAN: *What kind of stuff did they animate?*

TOM: I don't remember very much of any of that at all except that it was *incredibly* tedious! Beer commercials. And while I was doing this, I was doing posters for theater, began to love theater people at that time.

STEFAN: *They're a fun crowd.*

TOM: Yeah, they're wonderful, they love you, they gush all over you. Then they don't pay you. Just to be in their company should be more than enough compensation. So, I hit a couple of them and went away. *(Laughter.)* I used to like to hit in those days, it gave me a feeling of well-being. Isn't that awful! And I'd always *lose!* Well, not always. Then I set myself up at a popcorn factory for

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Tom Sutton
Born: 15 April 1937
Occupation: Artist
Art Education: At the time I came out of the Service they gave you a lot of easy money, so I went down to Boston, an ancient institution there called the Boston School of Arts. An ancient building with ancient people, everything's varnished a hundred million times in these places. So, I went down to Fenway, to the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, directly next to the museum — that's a *very* expensive school. They were having a scholarship test kind of thing — I didn't know what was going on, somebody said, "Just go upstairs and take a seat." So I got the grant scholarship thing, as far as it went, and got to go there, went there for about a year on the up-and-up, and then for about seven months on the not so up-and-up, and starved all of the time because there was no money to pay for food. We lived like we did in the Service. *(Laughter.)*
Favorite Author: William Kotzwinkle. Titles: ELEPHANT BANGS TRAIN; HERMES 3000; NIGHTBOOK; THE FANMAN; SWIMMER IN THE SECRET SEA; DOCTOR RAT. You might want to look for THE FANMAN — Fanman's this sort of leftover hippie type academic who wanders around New York, and he has this cheap Japanese plastic fan with a suction cup that's stuck to his forehead. *(Laughter.)*

Photo: J. Shelby Grass

Stefan Petrucha & Tom Sutton — THE STUDIO.

"I came across what is called the ugly American."

awhile, rented a popcorn factory. Downstairs there were hundreds of rats and people couldn't understand why I would do that. They never came upstairs. Once in awhile a large one, Ben, would come upstairs. *(Laughter.)* But he was very polite. He would sit there, stare at you —

STEFAN: *One of these big cat-sized rats.*

TOM: Well, how else would they be, they lived in a popcorn universe. I thought I was going to paint, but everything went all to hell. Through none of this, mind you, was there any business of collecting comic books. There were no comics stores. At the newsstand I never paid any attention to them. I had nothing to do with that ever since I left the Service, and then it was strictly a functional thing, it kept my butt out of trouble. I think in the end I was the only guy who killed his own hero. They weren't going to let me go, so I killed the son of a bitch. I got away with it by bypassing the so-called junior editor who was responsible for that, got it right down to the Japanese engravers who couldn't read English. Can you imagine running a paper with people who can't read the language? So, it got printed. The colonel said, "You son of a bitch. You think this is going to be easy don't you, fucker." Oh, he hated me. When I first got there he had this thing, he wanted me to join his bowling club, but I was in Tokyo and I had other interests. *(Laughter.)* There was a whole gang, a *massive* gang of people, who *lived* there — I swear, they never left the American compound the entire time they were there! It was like they were going to get infected. So what was the point? It was just like some shabby, depressing part of Jersey with all these little tract houses. Outside was this *magnificent* country of temples and people and a million things going on! Incidentally, I learned how to use a brush there. But you never learn things unless you become friends with the people, learn a little bit of the language. "Take the trouble to learn a few of the words? No, not us." That was the first time I came across what is called the ugly American. But we got sidetracked. Where were we?

STEFAN: *The popcorn factory.*

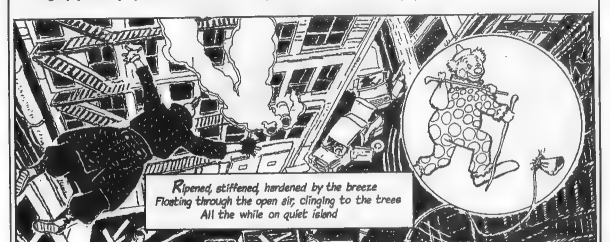
TOM: Oh, yeah.

STEFAN: *And you were only vaguely aware of comic books.*

TOM: No, not even vaguely, really. I remember a weird thing that used to happen that gave me an indication that somewhere out there there were a lot of people who were . . . like, it was the beginning of fan magazines.

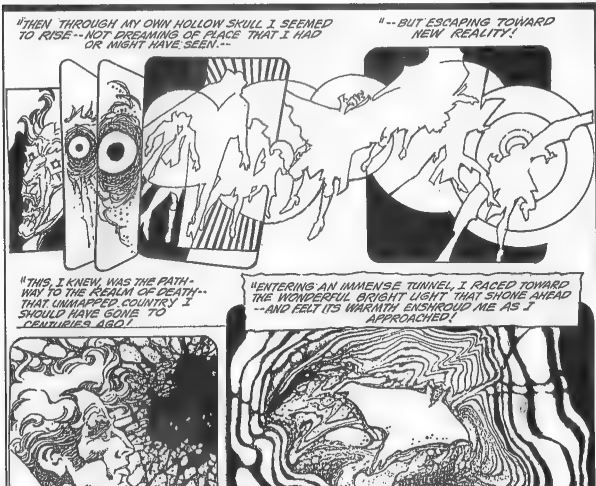
STEFAN: *Are we talking late '50s, early '60s?*

TOM: Oh, 1965, '64, somewhere in there. You would go to a party and listen to somebody's record of **Woody Guthrie** or something, and sit on the floor — those were the times of leotards; God, I loved leotards. *(Laughter.)* Oh, Jesus, that was the worst mistake in the world when they took leotards away. In dance they still have them — Jesus, I loved them, *all* of the girls used to wear them in those days. Okay, so somebody would discover that you had done a comic strip someplace and suddenly they'd be asking, "Do you know the guys that do this, that, whatever?" "No, I don't know what the fuck you're talking about, can I have some of your beer?" They couldn't seem to


Ripened, stiffened, hardened by the breeze
Floating through the open air, clinging to the trees
All the while on quiet island

Covers of nine red-skinned "mini-comics" (9¾" x 6") in story produced by Ron Thomas. Les Brown (mentioned), Gil Kane and Wally Wood (circa 1960).

"All this fan stuff — rolled up under Stan's sweaty armpit."


"THEN THROUGH MY OWN HOLLOW SKULL I SEEMED TO RISE--NOT DREAMING OF PLACE THAT I HAD OR MIGHT HAVE SEEN--
"--BUT ESCAPING TOWARD NEW REALITY!
"THIS, I KNEW, WAS THE PATH-WAY TO THE REALM OF DEATH--THAT UNMAPPED COUNTRY I SHOULD HAVE GONE TO CENTURIES AGO!
"ENTERING AN IMMENSE TUNNEL, I RACED TOWARD THE WONDERFUL BRIGHT LIGHT THAT SHONE AHEAD --AND FELT ITS WARMTH ENSHROUD ME AS I APPROACHED!
"MY VERY SENSE OF SELF WAS DISSOLVING INTO THE IRRESISTIBLE TIDE OF LOVE AND WARMTH!

Panels from one of many stories for DC's HOUSE OF MYSTERY series: I, Vampire.

understand that, you know, there's all kinds of different reasons for getting involved in these kinds of things. So anyway, I was sitting back in my room, down to my last rye crisp — have you had those days? *(Laughter.)* It's remarkably naked in here, I feel very empty.

STEFAN: *The biggest thing in the refrigerator is the light.*

TOM: Yeah! *(Laughter.)* So, I borrowed bus fare and I took the strips that I had from STARS AND STRIPES, went and met **Stan Lee.**

STEFAN: *Your first stop was at Marvel?*

TOM: Yes. And Stan was very nice to me. Stan looked at my stuff. I don't mean he just looked at one page, he looked at *everything!* He said, "Okay, you can draw." *(Laughter.)* "Now I'm going to show you how to do comic books."

STEFAN: *Ah!*

TOM: He gave me three scripts, if you want to call them that those little six-page Westerns — and he gave me a whole *pile* of Marvel paper that wouldn't fit in this little thing that I was carrying! I said, "What'll I do with this paper, it won't *fit!*" He said, "Roll it up under your arm, that's what I do." *(Laughter.)* I had this horrible impression, you know, all this stuff fans are lusting after — rolled up under Stan's sweaty armpit!

STEFAN: *Lends that personal touch.*

TOM: It does, a bit of ambiance! *(Laughter.)* Like after the penciller has had the bad flu and you get the pages - "Is that part of the drawing? No, that's *not* part of the drawing." *(Laughter.)* So, then I went over to DC and saw **Dick Giordano** and **Joe Orlando.** They were nice.

STEFAN: *Was your reception at DC different?*

TOM: Yes, it was very different. Everything was *very* uptown there. They had the carpets where you wondered if you were ever going to get your feet out. I couldn't understand how come Marvel was selling all of the comics but DC had all of the money. *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *That's what happens when you're owned by Warner.*

TOM: I don't think they were at that time, that was pretty far back. Oddly enough, **Berni Wrightson** was there that day.

STEFAN: *At DC in, like '65, '66?*

TOM: Yeah, I believe so. And he was working with a *pen* at that time, the things were kind of scratchy. **Joe Or-**

"They (DC Comics) wanted me to come back, I don't

lando was going around saying, "You guys are just what we wanted!" He was hot into this HOUSE OF MYSTERY trip at that time. But they wanted us to come back a couple of days later — they wanted *me* to come back, I don't know what they wanted **Berni Wrightson** to do. No, he already *had* a book out with them, I don't know what it was. In any case, I went and lived in Brooklyn for a little while with a friend who later became a super illustrator. I found

Character sketches for Stefan & Tom's SQUALOR mini-series (Jetty & Harry).

know what they wanted Berni Wrightson to do."

Brooklyn fascinating. There were lots of places you could really get in trouble there. *(Laughter.)* I walked the Brooklyn Bridge, I thought that was a terrific kick.

Also, I didn't have any money. I walked most of Manhattan. That's why I always bought the big farm boy shoes, you know. Other than that they don't *make* shoes that you can really walk in — I'm talking about serious walking. And people would look at you and say, "Hey, Abner!" *(Laughter.)* Anyway, so I didn't do much for DC.

STEFAN: *Did you end up doing any of the HOUSE OF MYSTERY stories for them?*

TOM: Not right then, no. I went back to Marvel with the Westerns, by the mail. I found out it was too expensive to live

"Woody was there, Shores, Colan and Williamson was there."

CEASE FIRE!
SIR, THIS IS STRANGE...
I'M SCARED!
I'M SCARED!
I'M SCARED!

Cover illustration from Tom's MAN-THING job (Marvel Fanfare #36).

"The writing award goes to Tom Sutton!"

you should have won that!" People were looking at us, you know. I said, "Hey, leave it alone." It's like . . . maybe you've had a woman like that, doesn't have any life of her own, lives through you.

STEFAN: *Yeah, that happened once.*

TOM: It's not a good idea, I don't recommend it. Not for either party is it a good idea. Finally, all of the art awards were gone and I didn't get anything, so I'm sitting there thinking, **"Jim Warren,** you fuckhead." But then he gets to the writing awards and he announces, "And the **Ray Bradbury** writing award goes to **Tom Sutton!"** I thought, "Oh, shit, wow, that's great!" You know, that's much neater. So I was going to become a famous writer then, I didn't want to draw pictures anymore. So, I went up there in my nifty little jacket, and **Warren** hauled out this goddamn thing, it must have been about five feet tall — and it was so unbelievably *gross!* I had to lug this thing back to my seat and sit there *behind* it.

STEFAN: *Do you still have it?*

TOM: No, I gave it to the children to play with. *(Laughter.)* I'm sure **Ray Bradbury** never heard of it.

STEFAN: *Well, you mentioned Woody.*

TOM: Woody. Back when I was in high school — and high school was always a joke, I got out the same way they get out today, I got too big for the seats so they got me out. But, I wound up taking three periods of 'art. One was authorized, the other two were because I would not go to the stinking gymnasium. I just said, "No, I'm not going in there, it stinks." Anyway, I had three periods of art, so I used to sit there with my EC comics —

STEFAN: *So you were reading comics after all?*

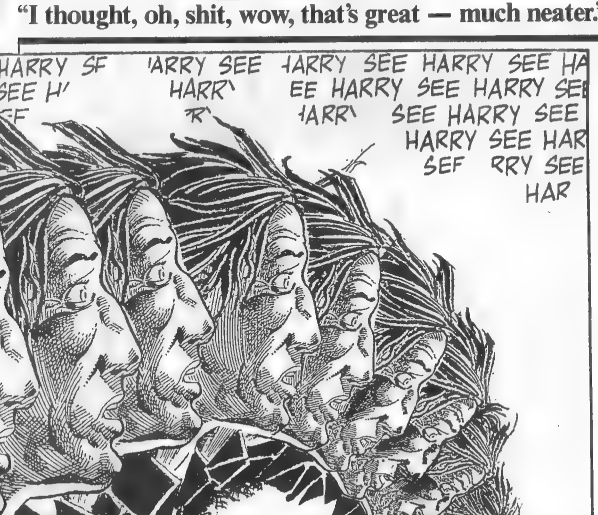
TOM: Oh, yeah. I was studying them. This was when you could go down and buy any EC comic off the stands brand new for a dime — go ahead, break their hearts. *(Laughter.)* And you did not slip it into a prophylactic, you *read* it. So, I would have these and people would leave me alone. I tried to figure out how he did the reflections on the helmets, how he got those shadows, all that stuff. I lived this whole thing. I had tons of them everywhere. **Woody,** I don't know what but there was *something* there, and all these years I still haven't figured out exactly what the hell it is. And I'm very very excited about the idea **Bhob Stewart** has, the *definitive* **Wallace Wood** book coming out. **Woody** was quite a complex character. He did a lot of things which apparently did not make him happy. I don't know why. But that's where I was at — mostly the science-fiction things. It

didn't look like a *drawing*, it looked like a little plastic model!

STEFAN: *So, you met him at Warren?*

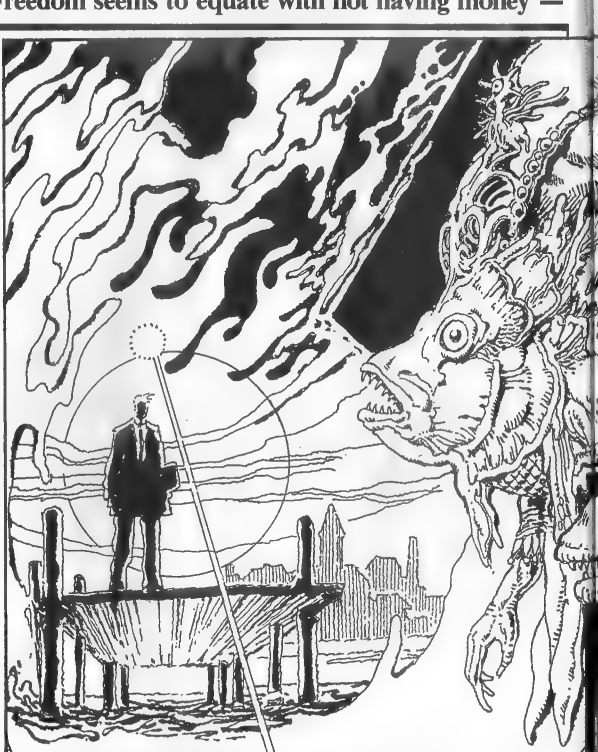
TOM: I was only *at* Warren twice, very briefly. I didn't like being in the city if I didn't have to. I met him at a party that **Warren** gave, but that was very brief because everybody was drinking too

"I thought, oh, shit, wow, that's great — much neater."


HARRY SEE HARRY SEE HARRY SEE HARRY SEE HA
EE HARRY SEE HARRY SEE HARRY SEE HARRY SEE
SEE HARRY SEE HARRY SEE HAR
HAR
EOWWWW!
DOINK

much and stuff like that. And that was very disappointing. He was in one of his down periods, you know. You've met people, I'm sure, and thought this is your great chance, but you've just picked the wrong day, they don't want to talk to anybody. And Bhob tells me that **Woody** absolutely *loathed* fans which is not what I was, but I was coming on like a fan That was a definite turnoff for **Woody.** That was total bullshit as far as he was concerned. Well so, then we did

"Freedom seems to equate with not having money —



Detail from a one-page illustration from "H.P. Lovecraft Visits INNSMOUTH" (all by Tom).

that for awhile, and then we had disagreeable times so we got out. Worked for Charlton.

STEFAN: *What did you do for Charlton?*

TOM: More weird stuff.. There were three weird titles. DOCTOR GRAVES was one of them. And they had some other scary titles - they weren't horror. The fun with them is you could work very rapidly. It was *cheap*, but at the same time I did very well with them, because I could turn it out. And I could write again. There was freedom. Freedom seems to equate with not having

as soon as you get money . . . you don't have freedom."

much money. *(Laughter.)* As soon as you get into these big suckers, you have money but you don't have any freedom! People forget this is *fun!* When it stops being fun, chuck it. After that what happened . . . Oh, we did PLANET OF THE APES for Marvel in their black-and-white series.

STEFAN: *And this is the mid-'70s by now?*

TOM: Yeah. I put an awful lot of work into that thing and it just didn't go, just didn't work. **Doug Moench** loved it, I loved it, but it wouldn't go! All they wanted was just a retread, a soap opera with ape masks. That's all they wanted.

STEFAN: *What came after?*

TOM: Oh, there were some other things

"Some of the best money I ever made, doing Topps cards."

around there, zombie characters that **Don McGregor** had made up —

STEFAN: *Ah, TALES OF THE ZOMBIE.*

TOM: I don't know, to me they're all rather interchangeable. And I did some superhero stuff, too — but, God, I hate those things.

STEFAN: *Too formulaic, too predictable, too what?*

TOM: It has no meaning to me at all. I would be better off with funny animal books.

STEFAN: *Have you ever done a funny animal book?*

TOM: I did a funny animal book, you never saw my funny animal book?

STEFAN: *No.*

TOM: I'll send it to you with the 3-D glasses. Yeah, it's called RADIOACTIVE HAMSTERS.

STEFAN: *That's yours?*

TOM: Yeah.

STEFAN: *I didn't know that.*

TOM: I did that with a Chinese fellow named **Chin** who was writing it when he didn't have orders to fill at his father's restaurant. *(Laughter.)* **Chin** was a wonderful guy, I loved him!

STEFAN: *Anyway, after PLANET OF THE APES?*

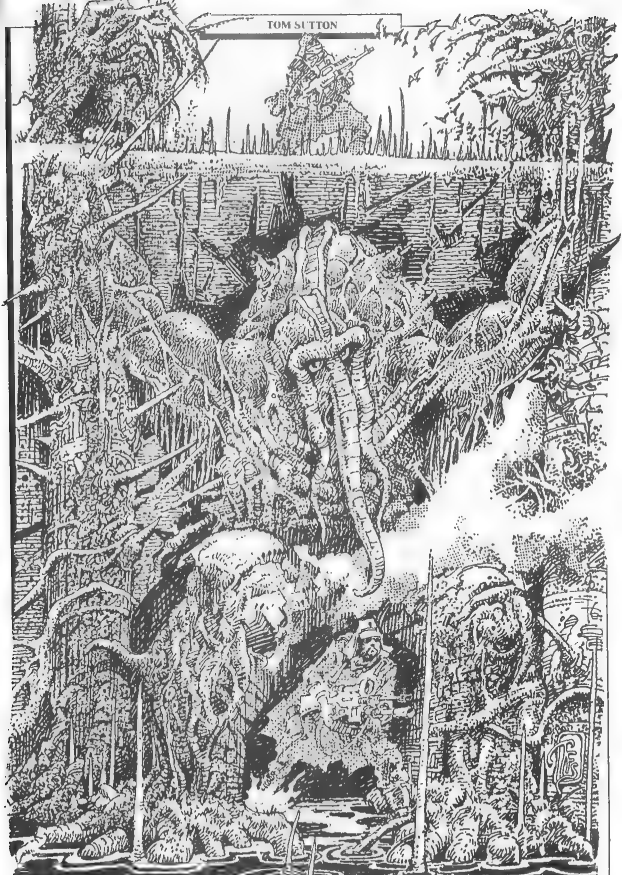
TOM: What did I do. Well, I did a lot of inking for Marvel. I went into a period there where I had brain stoppage. I could ink, you just use a different side of your head for that, but I wasn't interested in doing much of anything else. I did a hell of a lot of stuff, made some of the best money I ever made, doing Topps gum cards. **Woody Gelman,** who's been gone many years, was a great guy. What was his assistant's name . . . **Len Brown.** They used to have all of these crazy games, crazy cards, and they paid more money than any comic-book company ever *heard* of. Boy, did they have money. They gradually worked with only an "in-house" gang.

STEFAN: *What kind of cards did you work on?*

TOM: Oh, they were gross; dumb little kid cards, way before THE GARBAGE PAIL KIDS. And there was a guy out in Chicago in a similar business, he used to call me up — to hear the guy on the phone you could almost visualize him, you knew he had a black and white, yellow checked jacket, a straw hat, and a plastic squirt flower. *(Laughter.)* He was a wonderful guy. We used to do these little books that went in Cracker Jacks, and other things like that. It was *endless*. It was *crap*, but it was endless, you could make tons of money at it. It was mindless, all you had to do was turn your head off. All of these so-called gags, your whole thing was to gag, so you didn't have anything to think about. And this was very very bad. This led me to . . .

STEFAN: *Artist's block.*

TOM: Yeah. Then when you had to go back and think, you had to do an awful



Beautifully designed (and executed) page from MARVEL FANFARE. This Man-Thing story has generated quite a few residual payments for Tom: "That book just keeps on paying me money."

"Somebody called me up and said, do STAR TREK! I

DC Comics' STAR TREK the comic!!!

lot of rethinking. So, I inked just about everybody. I inked a lot of Marvel stuff, and I'm sorry but I don't remember the rest of them. Anything, whatever they sent, I inked. Inking away, I was entirely nocturnal at that time, never came out during the day at all. During the day I was hanging upside down in the closet. *(Laughter.)* And then — I don't know how this happened — the people at DC began sending me these eight-page stories for HOUSE OF MYSTERY and other anthology type books they had. I had to start learning how to draw all *over* again. It brought me right around, I had to be very hard on myself. It was very difficult. That's when I got a call from **Karen Berger.** She wanted to do this I, VAMPIRE thing — I, VAMPIRE was a backup for HOUSE OF MYSTERY. It was very sad, but the last issue was much better. I was out to prove something to myself. And I did.

STEFAN: *You worked your way through the slump.*

TOM: Yeah. Of course the magazine went away.Then somebody called me up and said, "Hey, Tom, do STAR TREK!" There were two or three different reasons I did that. I was having some medical problems and I needed that insurance. And for some reason, at that time, I didn't want to ink anymore — and for almost five years I didn't. I just turned these pages out endlessly, over and over and over.

STEFAN: *What did you think of the other inkers on your pencils?*

TOM: Nobody works as hard as I do and I'm never satisfied. I change — you may have noticed — I change a lot of things when I ink.

STEFAN: *Yeah, you seem to be having a good time, too.*

TOM: Yes.

STEFAN: *When did you start working on GRIMJACK?*

TOM: Well, STAR TREK was still going

turned these pages out endlessly, over and over and over."

on at that time. First Comics called, "Tom, help! Talk to **Ostrander,**" So I talked to **John Ostrander.** From the first half-hour I talked to **John Ostrander** I was totally enthused with this thing. **Ostrander's** like that. He, like yourself, has a background in show biz, really understands drama, and he has many, many, many things going for him. This is not the only thing he's got going for him, but as long as he's going to do it, he's going to make it *fun!* It's not quite as deadly as some of these people. So I said, "Gee, this could be neat." "Tom, you can do anything that you want."

STEFAN: *The magic words. So you enjoyed working with John Ostrander.*

TOM: Yeah, but times go on. I can't look at the thing now. I think in a way it's lost some of what it had that was exciting about it. Most of it is *me.* I never managed to stay in love with anything for very long. What else do you want to know?

STEFAN: *After GRIMJACK?*

TOM: Hm . . . I don't remember what happened after that.

STEFAN: *Well, I know you did MAN-THING in MARVEL PRESENTS.*

TOM: Oh, yeah! Put that in, remind them. *(Laughter.)* I thought that was going to be very different than it turned out to be. I can't really complain, because the money was good — that book just keeps on paying me money. I've never understood that.

STEFAN: *You're still getting the residuals?*

TOM: Yeah. I think I'll call them as soon as I get through talking to you, do another one of those. *(Laughter.)* I did work *very* hard on that book, though. That was the first book that I had inked in a very long time, and it was not easy. I think I'm harder on myself, when I ink my own things, than anybody else could be.

STEFAN: *Well, you're certainly closer to the original idea.*

TOM: But insane things happen, you rip up pages. The editor calls up, "Where's page nine?" "I just tore it to shreds." *(Laughter.)* But you do, you realize that there's no help for this poor fucking thing, mercy killing is the only way. And then, lo and behold, it all works.

STEFAN: *Tom, who are the artists you like?*

TOM: People like **Richard Corben,** who have become more popular doing things in their way than they would have by becoming a Marvel tool or a DC tool or like that. I believe Richard does much better in Europe than he does here. And, of course, speaking of Europe, **Moebius,** whose real name I never did get down pat. And **Berni Wrightson.** And above them all, **Milton Caniff.** And **Barry Windsor-Smith.** I actually inked a **Barry Windsor-Smith** page one time, for CONAN. I couldn't *believe* it. I don't remember how this happened, **Roy Thomas** was involved in it, but I got this *page.* Whoever was supposed to do it couldn't, something, and I got this thing, and I *looked* at it. I sat there for about an hour *looking* at it, going, "I can't believe this I *literally* cannot believe this!" *(Laughter.)* I called Roy and said, "Roy, what is it that you want me to do with this? There's nothing here to ink, it's all *done,* Roy!" It was finished, down to the last little piece of *grit* on the bottom of the castle wall.

STEFAN: *In other words, Smith's pencils were kind of complete.*

TOM: Complete ain't the word! They were *engraved!* Fantastic! When **John Buscema** took over CONAN it became something else. John is a primo illustrator of a certain school, okay. But there's only one **Barry Smith.** And this thing was one of these jobs where the old guy from 1940 was right, the *only* thing you could do with it is sit there and laboriously go over every single pencil

THE EYE OF MONGOMBO

by Doug Gray

You're a fool, Jumbalish! You know it won't take me long to find an antidote!
Jumbalish think of this! Try to prepare antidote without fingers!
CURSES!
You're still a fool, Jumbalish! I can always get someone else to help me!!
Jumbalish think of that, fool!
whoops!
Well, you still have to catch me, Jumbalish! I'm no sitting duck!!
AAAARGH!!
CHOP
Always are make bad jokes, rotten puns! Soon, you will not make jokes! You will only make loud, piercing screams!
Says you!! Outta my way, numskull!
Hey!!
an actual scene!

We asked Marcel Chevalier, the famous pantomime artist, to give his interpretation of the EYE OF MONGOMBO (translations provided by Mimes of America)

"thrilling, edge-of-your-seat excitement! Suspence and drama in the Hitchcock tradition!"

"Hilarious comedy... Sophisticated... would not be out of place on a shelf next to Oscar Wilde."

"terrific characters... continues the literary tradition of Ishmael, Huck Finn, and ... Oh!"

"I think I'm stuck... I can't breathe... help! ... For God's sake, someone please help me!"

Doug Sez

In this adventure/comedy series, anthropology professor and globe-trotting adventurer Cliff Carlson is fired due to his villainous arch-rival Professor Nuskle, and then turned into a duck by an evil witch-doctor. He and his faithful assistants take off on a journey to find the Eye of Mongombo, when they run into two old enemies: Gruber and Kawliga!

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

EYE OF MONGOMBO #1 36 pages, black-and-white comic book. $2.00 ($2.50 in Canada)

"Buscema took over CONAN — but there's only one [illegible]ith."

Well, we couldn't find any examples of Tom's work (aka) over Barry Windsor-Smith's CONAN — so here's a splash page from THE AVENGERS #99, 1972 (story: Roy Thomas).

line, turn yourself into a photostat camera. A lot of barbarian things were going on at that time, I'd get these big long things from **Gil Kane** — and I always admired Gil for his *incredible* facility, he's like the **Rachmaninoff** of cartoonists — *(Laughter.)* It looked like his pencil never left the page from the time he first put his hand to it until he flourished at the bottom, it was just one sinuous line. But there's no shadows, he doesn't bother with that shit. There's planes and angles, but everything's strictly linear. And for my part, I *enjoy* that, I think that's *great*. Then I have to figure out stuff and that entertains my head. And I'm also left to do the textures and backgrounds — he doesn't mess much with backgrounds — and whatnot.

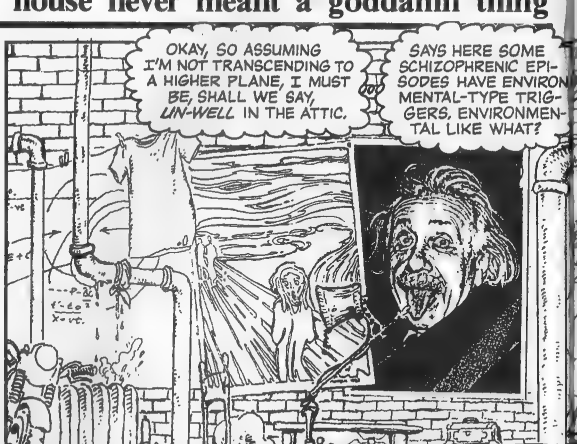
STEFAN: *Well, let's get to SQUALOR now. So, you got a call from Alex Wald about this script.*

TOM: Yeah, that's how that happened. An editor did not call me about this. Alex and I had chatted before on various matters, like how to use Zip-a-Tone or something. *(Laughter.)* I don't know how he came across it, but he said he had something he thought maybe I might be interested in. I said, "Oh, for God's sake, please send it." I had not seen anything I was interested in for a very long time. And yeah, it was very interesting. But it was a little tricky, it was a little difficult to image, because you were doing a straight book but at the same time it really wasn't *that* straight.

STEFAN: *Slightly off kilter, just a bit of English.*

TOM: Yes, and let's hope that the felt isn't too warped. *(Laughter.)* You see, that was just so much fun. And I didn't realize I was having *that much* fun with it until I got another hunk of stuff from somebody else and had to put SQUALOR

"A house never meant a goddamn thing


OKAY, SO ASSUMING I'M NOT TRANSCENDING TO A HIGHER PLANE, I MUST BE, SHALL WE SAY, UN-WELL IN THE ATTIC.
SAYS HERE SOME SCHIZOPHRENIC EPISODES HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL-TYPE TRIGGERS, ENVIRONMENTAL LIKE WHAT?

More SQUALOR from the team of Stefan Petrucha & Tom Sutton.

aside to do this other thing, which we will not talk about, but which was very professionally put together and was like eating a piece of Wonder Bread. *(Laughter.)* Wonder Bread was never intended to be eaten, it was intended to make little sculpty figures out of.

STEFAN: *Well, what was it you liked about SQUALOR?*

TOM: I can identify with SQUALOR very easily.

STEFAN: *It does seem to tie into your early background, you know, with the rat-infested popcorn factory.*

TOM: Yes, with the plumbing hanging from the top of the ceiling. And more than that. It seems to me Harry's attitude, he's very *intense* . . . Well, from what you've written, this is not a new thing with Harry, this whole A-Time Continuum that he's going through. This is a theory that he compounded some time before, right?

STEFAN: *Yes.*

TOM: Before we meet him?

STEFAN: *Yes. When we pick him up, he's forced to live with it after making the bed.*

TOM: Yeah. And the idea of he's doing relatively simpleminded things, like juggling books in the stacks of the library, other stuff like that, and living a kind of a marginal existence, which never seems to really *get* to him. So far, anyway.

STEFAN: *Well, his heart's not quite on the planet.*

TOM: Well, that's where I am. None of these things really *meant* anything to me. I remember . . . I've had three houses, three mortgages, and I used to drive these dear wives crazy — and God bless them, I honestly mean that — because I'm an irresponsible child. I really am. It's terrible to hurt somebody like that, you know, and I would feel *bad* about it — but I knew I would do exactly the same thing again. A house never meant a goddamn thing to me, it was just a big *thing*. *(Laughter.)* That also comes from my background — to me, it comes from

to me; it was just a big thing. *(Laughter.)*"

all of our backgrounds at this time. First of all, you know you're never *really* going to *own* it. That's the big fake, right!

STEFAN: *Right, you're only borrowing.*

TOM: It's a fucking joke! If you're complaining about renting, what are you complaining about? You either rent it from Joe Schmoe or you rent it from the bank. And they say, "Oh, you're going to make so much money when you turn it over." Bullshit. What the fuck is the point to a lot of it — there isn't any! It's called playing the game. I could never see that. I also like the idea that if you come to the end of a lease, you put the five things you own in something and you go away. *(Laughter.)* You don't have to hire giant trucks, you know. So, the loner type of thing becomes a life trip. I don't really even know my own children. They come around and they're nice, which is really exceptionally *kind* of them! Considering the fact that I really wasn't around that much. Nor do I find this to be a great catastrophe. I think things could have been a hell of a lot worse *had* they been around.

STEFAN: *Do you think you might have been a bad influence on them or —*

TOM: Yeah, oh yeah. I *know* it. I also — I don't want to dwell on this thing too much, but *you* started it —

STEFAN: *Sorry. (Laughter.)*

TOM: There is *something* about growing up, being a very much indulged only child, that does something to you. It makes you . . . I've talked to other guys who do some similar stuff to what I do, and although the personality is quite different, there's a whole bunch of background, a whole bunch of stuff, that just reads loud and clear. Number one is the idea that you are utterly fucking *delighted* with yourself! It's shameless, it's terrible, it's *awful*. My shrink, **Arthur O'Grady,** says that's what most of the problem is. You see, you're dealing with people who don't feel like you do. "You'd be happy to sit there until the fucking nuclear power plant blows up in your ear — and you don't really care if it does, do you?" I had to stop and think for a moment, "What is a nuclear power plant?" *(Laughter.)* I swear to you, it goes like that. And I think that's wonderful. I don't think about that fucking thing fifteen miles away from me. I do think you have a severely limited . . .

STEFAN: *Perspective?*

TOM: Perspective and social abilities. It's like your social abilities are atrophied. I have no ability to do parties.

STEFAN: *I was never good at parties myself.*

TOM: When anything like that comes up, I can think of 900 things I can be much better employed at.

STEFAN: *Do you think that isolation goes hand in hand with the creative impulse?*

TOM: You know it does.

STEFAN: *Yeah. There's a lot of that in Harry.*

TOM: There is no other way.

STEFAN: *Well, one can hope.*

TOM: Sure, we all try to do it. I get that same feeling from the writer **John Gardner,** I think that's what John was trying to do for an awful long time. All of his characters seem to have that same problem. He's doing this and he's lying to himself, lying to them — *(Laughter.)* And he can't wait to get away, back to the womb with a view or whatever. But I think that's very *tough*, and if you can't *take* that, I don't know how you do it. I guess you don't, you go find something else to do. I would never recommend this to anybody. There have really been times when I have felt that . . . I don't know, like totally ostracized, alienated, and I don't know what the fuck I'm doing here. I go down the street and I say, "What the fuck are all you assholes grinning at?" What is this, a fucking zoo? Look at them, they're all so happy in their goddamn dumb lives. *(Laughter.)* Isn't that terrible.

STEFAN: *Yeah, yeah, but there are moments of clarity and peace, too, aren't*

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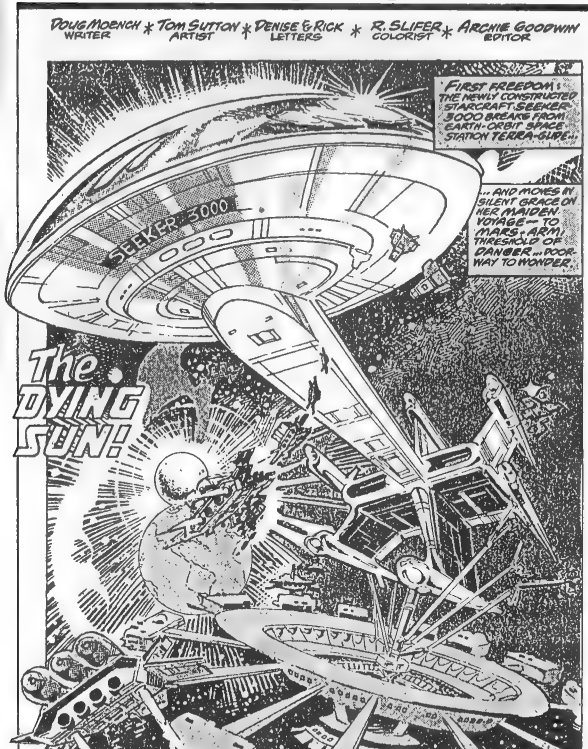
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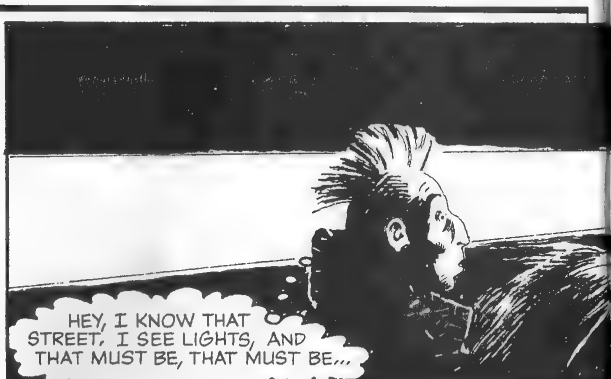
SEEKER 3000
The DYING SUN!

Before the STAR TREK comic book . . . Marvel produced this story for MARVEL PREMIERE #41: SEEKER 3000 by Doug Moench & Tom Sutton (1978).

there?

TOM: Oh, definitely! I'll go down the street, *"La de da de bump bump do da dum!"* And two weeks later I'll get a call from somebody saying, "I'll never speak to you again." "Wha-wha-wha?" "You walked straight by me, pushed me out of the way, you didn't even say hello!" "Well, who are you?" *(Laughter.)* And it

"These things that pass themselves off as children



Huge panel from First Comics' SQUALOR (mini) series.

turns out to be somebody I like, and I blew the whole fucking thing because I paid no attention.

STEFAN: *Because you were thinking about something else?*

TOM: Yeah. I was someplace else. I'll tell you, I go out on walks — he says I have to take these walks because I am a downtrodden diabetic person, you understand — and I almost get run over because I forget where the fuck I am. It's so pathetic. Well, that's it — you spend so much time with yourself that you're not totally aware of what's going on. To me that's not all bad, and it does change with age. I remember it being terribly frustrating, I could never figure it out when I was young. I could *not* understand why *everybody* didn't fucking love me! You're supposed to, this is magnificent, super, wonderful Tom! And some people found something to quibble about in that. *(Laughter.)* I guess, as one lady put it, "Tom, it's fun, but it's such a strain." And it's such a weird thing, you really *can't* share this with anybody. You can sit here for the famous 1,001 nights and turn this stuff out and out and out and out, and you can't share it with a wife, you can't share it with anybody.

STEFAN: *You're depressing me. (Laughter.)*

TOM: Well, if it's possible, writing is even more so.

STEFAN: *Yeah, because at least with art you're doing something outside of yourself. When you're sitting down with just a bunch of words —*

TOM: How can you say, "No, you cannot read that because I don't want anyone to see that yet because it's not *born* entirely or something." So, if you're not willing to take the whole thing, it's best not to have anything to do with it, and that's why I would not advise anybody to do it. People do occasionally ask me to go talk at one of the schools, and I don't, I say I can't.

STEFAN: *Because your advice would be "get out?"*

TOM: And I wouldn't be happy. Some people really like to do that, God knows why. I went over to the school, the middle school — and I don't know what a middle school is, we didn't have one when I was going to school — because the art teacher there thought I could do something oh art, you know. So I did, and I got a rousing ovation because I work for Marvel Comics and I work for DC Comics! And these things that pass themselves off as children today are vile little things. They have no sense of decorum, they have no sense of respect. I went and did my number, and the final thing you always do is ask for questions. This one in the center who had been *staring* at me the whole time, immediately the hand went up, and it got up. It had one question, "How much money do you make?" "None of your fucking business." *(Laughter.)* No, I think I said, "Not nearly enough." But can you picture it, you go through this whole thing that's essentially about art, and all that this little delight wants to know is money. He's going to be fine in yuppie land.

STEFAN: *Well, we had the stock market crash before, I imagine something else will take care of the new generation. (Laughter.) But it's not all —*

TOM: My God, you *are* depressed. *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *It's not all so bad.*

TOM: SQUALOR, back to SQUALOR.

STEFAN: *All books aren't done purely for monetary gain, look at us for example, look at SQUALOR.*

TOM: Yeah. *(Laughter.)* Yes, look at fools like us. Well, listen, when they make the movie — *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *Do you want to talk a little about the pencils and inks you're doing for SQUALOR? You mentioned once you were trying to go for a flat look.*

TOM: Yeah, because it's the subject matter that *should* dictate the style. That's something that's never really gotten across too often in comics. The

today are vile little things — they have no respect."

great old illustrators always knew that. The thing is, you can become intensely realistic about this whole thing, and that would wreck it. On the other hand, there's a lot of things that have to be left to the very last, little pieces of Xerox and friendly swipes and other things. They get stuck in corners and whatnot because I like them there, and I think they help. I'm sure if they didn't help then Stefan would peel them off. *(Laughter.)*

STEFAN: *No, I never get to see the originals.*

TOM: Oh, that's right! I forgot.

STEFAN: *I just talk to people.*

TOM: Yes, that's right, and I don't like that. That arrangement, I don't like that at all.

STEFAN: *Well, you're in Massachusetts, I'm in New York, First is in Chicago.*

TOM: But still it's *your* book.

STEFAN: *It's* our *book, Tom.*

TOM: No.

STEFAN: *It's a visceral —*

TOM: I'm not doing this uselessly, but the concept, the idea, is the life of the book, and that makes it yours. You juiced this up.

STEFAN: *I had the nightmare.*

TOM: I think that the whole thing, every single chapter — I don't see why, it should come back to you. And get yourself a big stamp and stamp the back of it or something; and if you don't, scream and yell.

STEFAN: *Well, I've had very, very few problems with the pencils or the inks or the way the whole thing is coming out. To my eye it all looks great.*

TOM: It's the goddamn placement of balloons. I don't trust anybody to place balloons, and stuff like that.

STEFAN: *Are you happy with the artwork?*

TOM: Well, yeah.

STEFAN: *To my eye, the look of the whole book seems kind of different from the stuff you've done before.*

TOM: It is.

STEFAN: *How would you describe that difference, Tom?*

TOM: It has to be, because if you just allow yourself to drift along doing the same fucking thing, I think that's kind of sad. I want to change, I want to do different things. But I still don't want to do the guys jumping off the roof!

STEFAN: *SQUALOR definitely isn't that.*

TOM: It's fortunate when you can go and do other things. I would like to do them with other tools, I would like to do them in other ways, more graphic ways of doing it. That always seems to bother people. Bother them, it *terrifies* them.

STEFAN: *Experimentation?*

TOM: Yes. At the very beginning you must have run right into that, "Well, they're not going to understand this, you're going to lose them."

STEFAN: *Well, I broke a couple of rules with it. I submitted a full script unsolicited, which is not the way you're supposed to do it.*

TOM: I don't think *even they* believe that, it's just easier for them if they don't have to go through more than three pages. To make your presentation, you couldn't have done it any other way.

STEFAN: *Yeah. I think part of it is because in some ways it's so similar to a lot of stuff that's already out there, so to make it look different you have to see the full script, or A-Time could be considered just any old other dimension with funny things floating around. You have to get the rules down and understand its relation to "Real Time."*

TOM: And I think there *is* an audience for SQUALOR. It is not the gigantic X-Boy audience, and that's something you can be very happy with. When you find your own audience, you play to it and that's it.

STEFAN: *That's what I'm certainly looking forward to, and I guess we'll find out just how big that audience is.*

TOM: I think it's a lot bigger than it used to be.

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

IGNORANT MOVIE MAKERS!

Dear Mr. Kraft, comic-book fans, and movie makers:

I find it difficult to digest the thought of movie makers being so ignorant. Why make a movie of a comic book character if you're not going to use his costume? The costume gives his name more purpose! The makers of the PUNISHER movie must be lacking in artistic talent. Like screenwriter **Boaz Yakin**, I have seen COBRA already. Though somewhat sad news, issue #76 was very informative.

I *hate* what the Punisher does! So "why" is he such an interesting character to me? Maybe it's because I love my family so much (I haven't been married) and I can identify with him on those terms. He has an origin that disturbs most all of us. With the love of family, maybe this is why the Punisher and the Batman are so popular . . . well, partly so. Frank Castle, in "fictional" fact, has witnessed death in Vietnam, every week as a *cop* (according to the movie), and the murders of his wife and kids. I would think that such memories *could* take someone over the edge.

On page 9 of COMICS INTERVIEW #76 we see a picture of the Punisher, as played by **Mr. Lundgren**, sitting on a motorcycle. Without a word, we get a "feeling" of what the character is like. It looks great in black and white, just as the Punisher views our world. Although it may not need it here, I'm sure that a "skull" emblem would do much for other scenes. Can you imagine him in the shadows, with only his head and skull emblem being seen? Cool!

I had a letter printed in CI #70, in which I expressed a desire to become a well-known comic book illustrator. There is one business that I would rather be involved in, and that is "movies." Ever since seeing STAR WARS at age 10, I've wished I could be a movie director. These days, I actually get a feeling it's "possible," especially after the **Boaz Yakin** interview.

Here are my suggestions on what should be done with the PUNISHER movie:

1. Spend the money to remake some of the film (for parts that are lacking something).

2. Drop it to a PG-13 rating by showing the graphic violence in a way that leaves more to the imagination (because money lost in remaking scenes would be gained by dropping it to a PG-13 rating, assuming it is rated "R").

3. Of course, include the skull chest-emblem at some point in the movie. But say for instance . . .

a) The climax is one of the best parts, already shot? Then leave it and have the Punisher wearing the skull either on a T-shirt or the kevlar vest in earlier scenes. One reason or another, there could be reason for him not having it on in other scenes.

b) Maybe the climax could be *re*-made, where he *does* spray-paint the kevlar vest.

4. From an artistic point of view, compare how the film would look in black and white. Perhaps no movie character deserves black and white like the Punisher does. (Think about it.)

5. Release it to theaters next summer or fall?

6. Sell T-shirts and so forth, to build the movie hype. All the while showing well-deserved previews at theaters would help.

7. Let Warner Bros. do the fixing of the film!

Just a few more things to mention.

I bet Frank Miller has written a great story for ROBOCOP II! I think Frank Miller should be and *deserves* to be a "movie director" (while continuing to write the stories).

I would love to have a job in the movie business, in the creative process, for high-action movies. I would enjoy doing story boards for **Boaz Yakin**, to submit to motion picture companies (but only action movies).

I would like to see **James Cameron** direct the next BATMAN movie, or perhaps **Steven Spielberg**. The same goes for the FANTASTIC FOUR movie. I think a movie should be made on the story of CONCRETE, based on the comic book but with an ending; a happy one, preferably. It's science fiction, and I bet **James Cameron** would be interested in the project (heck, **Mr. Cameron** once wanted to be a comic book illustrator).

John Daniel Phillips
Rt. 1, Box 309
Billings, MO 65610

DON'T WALK AWAY, BENEE

Dear Dave,

Just thought I'd tell you what I thought of COMICS INTERVIEW #72, a darn good read. I was particularly impressed with the job done by interviewer **Renee Witterstaetter.** (Wot a moniker!) Having handled a couple of the "get as many interviews on this as you can" assignments for you in the past, I know that what at first sounds like a fun challenge can turn into a nightmare of sorts before it's half finished, redundancies being the major pitfall. Renee's four interviews, with **Grant, Zeck, Beatty,** and **Zimelman**, were all quite interesting, and covered the same ground only when it was necessary. I'm looking forward to more interviews by her in the future, and they don't all have to be about the guy with the big skull.

Darrel L. Boatz
6 Hickory Bow
Macomb, IL 61455

SORRY

In issue #77, page 11, we credited the pencils and inks to Dean Motter. The pencils were done by Robert Walton. Our apologies . . .

'Night, Robert.

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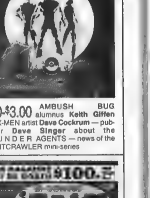

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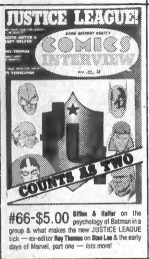

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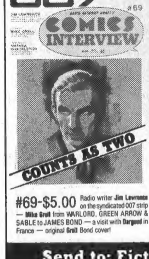

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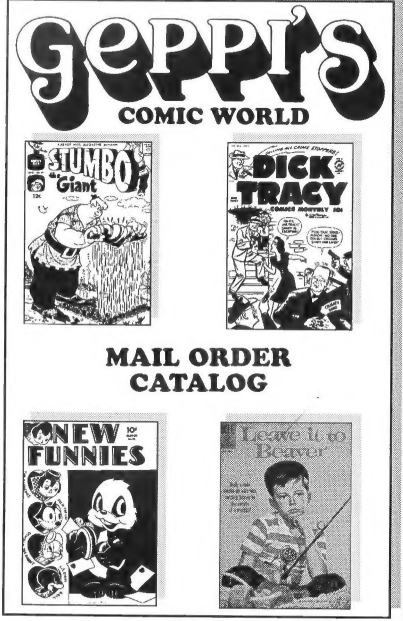

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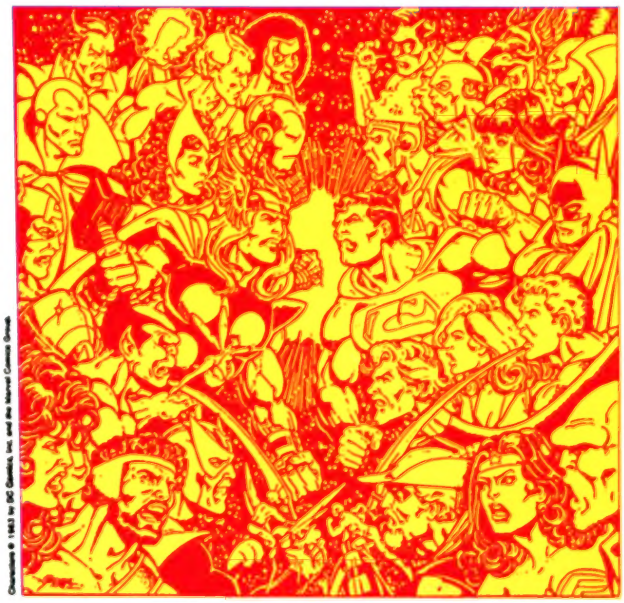

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